

SHORT TALKS
TO
YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

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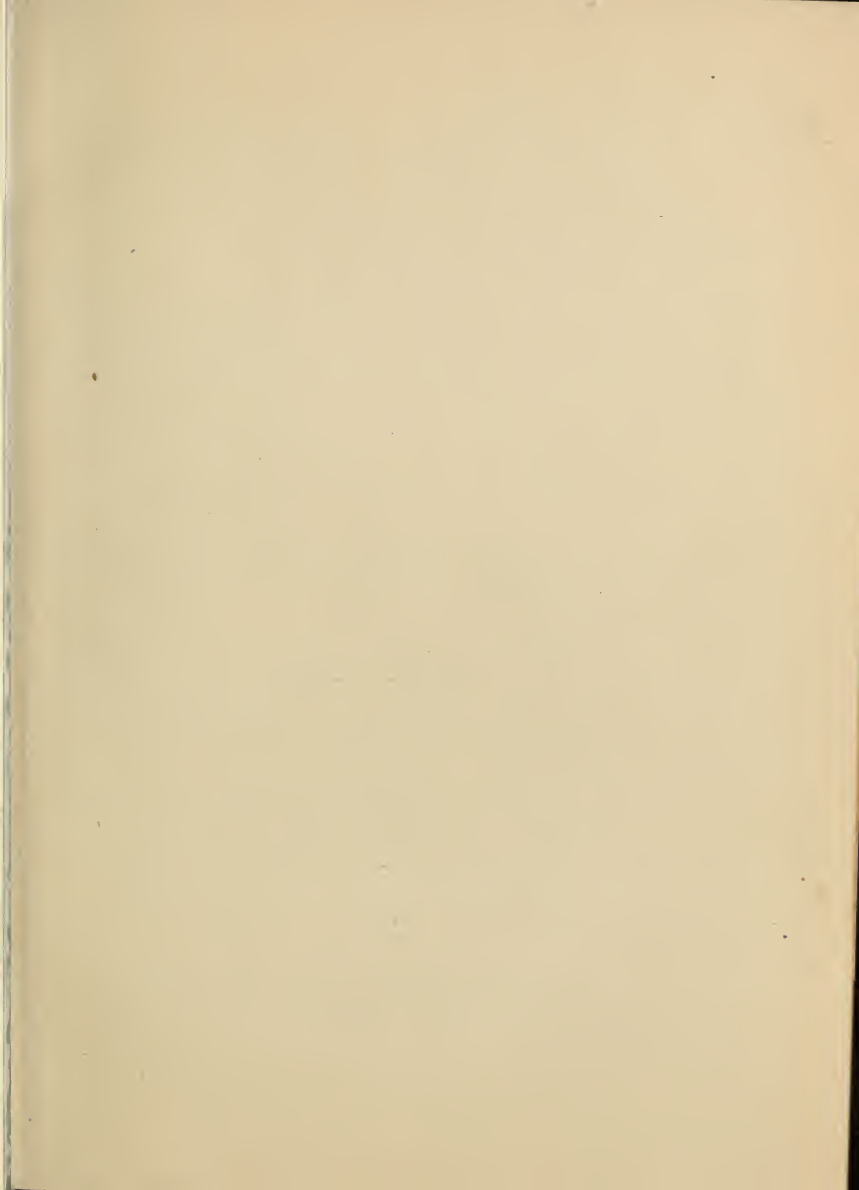
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SHORT TALKS
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YOUNG CHRISTIANS
ON THE
EVIDENCES.

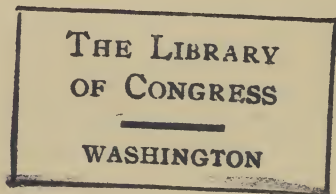
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REV. C. O. BROWN.

CHICAGO:
F. H. REVELL, 148 AND 150 MADISON STREET,
PUBLISHER OF EVANGELICAL LITERATURE.

[1895]

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To the Young Christians, who first heard, and with
manifest sympathy encouraged, these
talks, they are now inscribed,
with the affection of
A PASTOR.



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PREFACE.

These talks to young Christians on the *Evidences* constitute the first series of a plan which includes three, the other two being one on the *Doctrines* and one on the *Moralities*. They were begun and for some time continued without a serious thought of publication. A busy pastor found himself surrounded by a large company of young converts, whose emotional experiences were all that could be expected, but many of whom knew little about the intellectual basis of Christianity. Frequent services of a revival character, which were still in progress, supplied abundant fuel for their zeal, and as the revival continued nearly five months with constant results, there was need of ballast lest the sails of zeal and emotion should carry too much wind.

Moreover, there had been two attempts by enemies of the work to bring on a lecture from the modern apostle of infidelity. These attempts both failed. But rumor declared that he would come soon, and a local paper printed the blasphemy which he would have uttered, if a wise Providence had not fastened him into unsympathetic snow-drifts, sixty miles away.

With the attention of young, and to a great extent uninformed, minds thus turned upon the utterances of an infidel, at a time when they were undergoing their first inner struggles with doubt, it seemed wise that some words of this sort should be spoken.

There were several difficulties in the way of any plan to reach the wants of these converts. The audience, while composed mostly of young people from sixteen to twenty

years of age, had in it a number of children and another number of persons of mature years, who, young in Christian experience, were invariably present. Many were unaccustomed to study and some were well along in a college course.

To meet the wants of all, the colloquial style which prevails was chosen. I have, purposely, avoided learned terms and abstract arguments. My only desire was to find a way to interest, and so inform, such a variously composed throng. The hope has been that those who came would get some of the outline facts of the *Evidences* and more than all that they would be incited to pursue in private study the thoughts thus aroused.

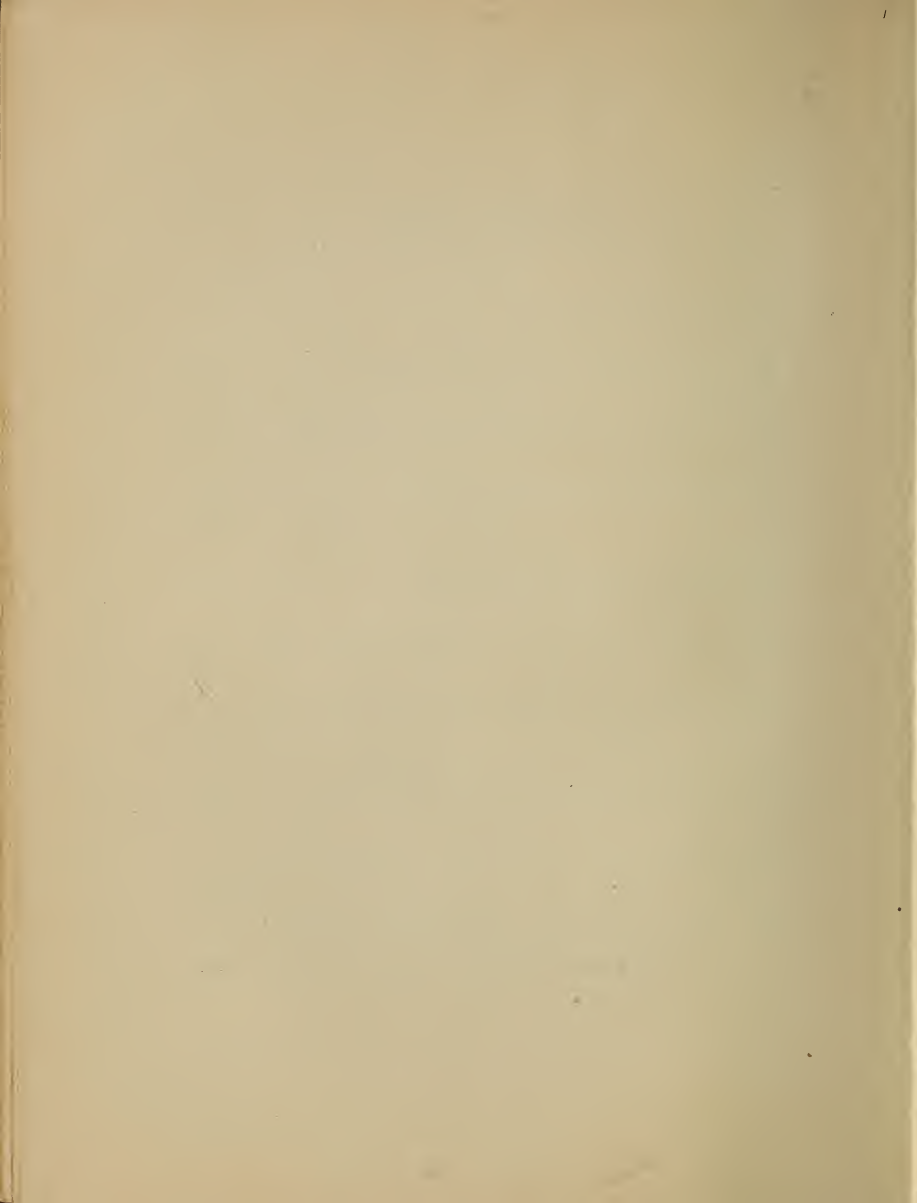
The plan seems to have succeeded. The interest and attendance have been constant from the first. The period when depression and falling away usually begin among converts has gone by and the band is still unbroken, a fact which their pastor attributes in part, under divine grace, to the interest which they have manifested in these Tuesday evening talks; for there is among them a very perceptible feeling of intellectual as well as spiritual assurance and an air of confidence in the fact that Christianity welcomes the investigations of Reason no less than the devotions of Faith.

It was not until the demand arose among these young Christians themselves, and not then until it had been seconded by various requests from brethren in the ministry, that publication was seriously considered. It is not claimed that there is here anything new unless it may be the method which has sought to adapt the facts to such listeners. There is surely no pretence of literary excellence.

KALAMAZOO, July, 1885. CHAS. O. BROWN.

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I.

THE FOUNDATION.

Gen. i., 1. *In the beginning, God.*

“**I**N the beginning” of what? Try to answer that. You will find yourselves going further and further back in your thought. You will go back past cities and villages till you find the land a wilderness grand in its solitude, and the mountains lifting their lofty summits of eternal snow unseen by the eye of man. You will go back past the wilderness and the mountains and the seas, and you can think of a time when there was no sea, nor any mountains, nor any forest. You can come to a place in your thoughts where you are alone—where all human beings have deserted you—where

there is no sound to relieve the ear, and no familiar sight to greet the eye, and no person to give you companionship. And yet you will not feel entirely alone. You cannot imagine that. Just as in your experience you may have sometime been all alone in a great forest and have still felt that you were not alone; and you have felt oppressed by the very solitude because it seemed to bring you so near to an Unseen Being; or as when you have been alone in your chamber at midnight and could not feel alone; oppressed with solitude and yet feeling that another Being was there and knew every thought; so you cannot imagine yourself going back so far as to be entirely alone in the world. You can go back of the mountains and the seas, but you will still feel, although you may not distinctly think it, "Some Power made me, some Being caused my existence, and that Person is beholding me. I cannot be alone, for if I were alone

then I must have caused my own existence. But I know that I did not." So it is impossible for us to get beyond the thought of God. "In the beginning, God." In the beginning of what? In the beginning of everything. I can go back of the tree to the seed, and back of the seed to the chemical elements, but I can't go back of God. I can't think of a time when God was not. I cannot imagine things in any possible shape without God. "In the beginning, God." Try ever so hard, you can't get past that rocky bulwark.

Many of you, perhaps all of you, have reached a point where you no longer try to get beyond God, or try to think that yourselves and everything else were made by nothing, and that there is no God.

But you will meet those who talk that way. You will meet those who deny God's existence. Just think of the text, "*In the beginning, God,*" and hold to that. As

long as you hold to that, you have an immovable foundation. Think how utterly impossible it is to get beyond that thought. Men may argue and stir up a great deal of fog between us and that thought; but when the fog clears away, you will find that the fog was not a wall—you can go on a long way beyond the fog. I remember one time when we were marching in northern Alabama, we had in view a distant chain of mountains, so distant that they seemed with their soft outlines almost to blend with the clouds. And toward evening a mist arose parallel with the mountains, and in the distance we could hardly tell which was which. In some places where the mist rose high enough it obscured the great, rocky hills, and we mistook it for the mountains themselves. But we were constantly drawing nearer, and presently the sun came out with an evening glory, which lighted the whole scene. Then the mists lifted, and the moun-

tains stood out rugged and grand, every outline distinct. There was no longer any doubt which was fog and which was mountain.

Men's arguments against God are like that. You mistake the fog for the mountain. You think you have reached the end in their talk, and can get along without God. But don't be so foolish. The slightest wind will blow that mist away. The mountain is beyond—grand, eternal, unchangeable it stands. "In the beginning, God." A fog may hide the mountain, but no fog can change it. After every fog has lifted you must reckon with the mountain, for your road leads straight up to the mountain. Through every mist at last you will come up to that Eternal Hill, and it will be well then if you can say, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Ps. cxxi., 1-2.)

And when you think of it, why should anyone want to get rid of the thought of God? Why should anyone argue against the existence of God? Perhaps you and I have been wicked enough, at one time or another, to wish that there were no God in the universe. We, perhaps, would have been very comfortable to think that there was no God.

Now, why is it that so many deliver lectures, and write books, and think out arguments, to prove that there is no God; to make a great fog so as to hide the mountain? When they get their fog well started they cry out at the top of their voices, "There is no mountain, I can't see any mountain, and you are very foolish if you think that you can see any mountain." I stood on the shady side of my wood-shed the other morning as the sun was shining in all his glory. I could not see the sun. I could see only the wood-shed. Suppose I had called out

to those who were passing and enjoying the sunshine and saying to each other what a bright morning it was, "You are very foolish for thinking that there is any sun. I can't see anything but a wood-shed. There isn't anything but a wood-shed, and they who refuse to believe in the wood-shed and insist on believing in the sun are very foolish!" Now, there are a great many whose talk about God is as reasonable as that.

Some very wise people, in their way, are standing on the shady side of a few germs, and they say, "I can't see anything but the germs. There isn't any sun. You are fools for believing there is any God."

But the people who were passing, covered and warmed by the rising sun, would have laughed at me and my wood-shed. So there are millions who by faith and a Christian experience, are walking where the sunshine of God's love is pouring over them. They will pity and pray for any poor soul who tells them that there is nothing but a wood-shed

instead of the sun, or a fog-bank instead of the mountain. They would laugh at him if the matter were less serious. "In the beginning, God." There is the glorious Sun of Righteousness, which you will find after every wood-shed has been blown away.

Well, why is it that so many can't bear the thought, "In the beginning, God?" Is it because they think that they could manage affairs in anyway really better if God were not? Is it because they think that the mountains and the moon and the stars were really made without God? No, that's not it, for what does it matter to those who hate the thought of God, how or by whom they were made? There they are, and they are the same in all of their glory and their utility whoever made them. Is it because anyone is really afraid that God will do any wrong to any being in the world? Has anyone really ever thought such a thing? No! no! No one ever really thought so. Many have wickedly accused God. In great sadness

and grief, perhaps, they have uttered hard words against God. But they know, in their hearts, that those words were not true. They know that they will have to repent of those wicked thoughts and words toward the kind and good God.

There is a clue which will help us to get at the reason why so many foolishly deny the existence of God. For, my friends, human hearts are in many particulars the same. Some sorrows are common to all; some things make everyone joyful. Sin produces some effects which will be alike in all; and so righteousness will produce some effects alike in all. Now we can look into our own hearts and find an answer to the question why the thought of God is so hateful and distressing to a great many. When was it that you first dreaded the thought of God? Or if you cannot think of the first time think of any time when the thought of God and His watchful eye looking through your very heart, was distressing to you; some time

when you would have been very glad to believe that there was no God. I have not asked any one of you, but I can tell you when. It was not when you had been doing something which your heart said was right, like feeding the hungry or clothing the naked, or obeying God's law, but it was at some time when you had been doing that which your heart said was not right. The first time you ever thought of yourself as a sinner was such a time. It wasn't the doing of right but the doing of wrong that made the thought of God seem terrible. It was at such a time that you would have been very glad to look at some one's fog-bank instead of the mountains; at some one's wood-shed instead of the rising sun.

And I have said human hearts are alike. Depend upon it young people, such experiences are the very causes which have led men, who are called learned or brilliant or scientific, to try in their books and lectures to stir up fog-banks, so that you cannot see

the mountains, and to put up wood-sheds so that they cannot see the sun. Their hearts, with all of their learning, are not essentially different from yours and mine. They are not so good but that they have been conscious that their hearts were sinful. When they knew *that* the thought of God was painful to them just as it was to you and me. I tell you plainly that the Apostle describes their case exactly in one of his letters:

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. (Rom. i., 21, 22, 25 and 28.)

The same testimony within which tells us there is a God, tells us also that He is of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity. That's why a sinful heart hates the thought of God, and would gladly get rid of that

thought if it could. But, "In the beginning, God"—there He stands. The mountain is there. We are journeying on toward the mountain. All are journeying. Some by a way where, with clear light and an open countenance, they see the mountain and rejoice in its grandeur. Others, surrounded by a mist, are journeying too. *We are all journeying*, for

"Life is short, and time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though strong and brave,
Still, like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."

Some do not see the mountain. They deny that there is any mountain. But they are as surely journeying towards it as the others. They are in the wrong road—a road which will lead them up against the mountain, where there are only precipices, dark and frowning rocks and awful chasms. When they come to the mountain they will find that there is no way of ascent. God grant the mist may clear first. They themselves

have made it. They themselves are responsible for it. But God grant it may clear. "*In the beginning, God.*" My friends, do we accept that thought? Do we gladly think of God, or do we try to think there is no God?

If we do try to get rid of the thought of God that is a testimony that our hearts are sinful, for only sin desires to escape from the thought and the eye of God. Why did Belshazzar tremble when he saw the handwriting on the wall? He knew that God sent the hand, and he knew that he was a sinner. He was not at peace with God. Only sin dreads and tries to escape from God.

Well, if that be the effect now; if the very thought of God is painful so that we try to escape from it when we are unreconciled to God; if the effect is such that thousands write books and deliver arguments to try and believe their wish that there may be

no God, what will it be for one to stand unreconciled in His presence? No more comfortable fog-banks then! All naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do!

What shall we do with hearts which even now try to escape the thought of God?

There is only one way in the world whereby the sinner can think with pleasure that *God is*, and that His holy eye is upon him every moment. That is Christ. Christ is the way. Through his blood he destroyed the enmity and made peace. Many, many have recently found Christ, and in finding Christ they have found peace with God.

“Not all the blood of beasts,
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.”

II.

THE BIBLE—HOW IT WAS MADE.

ONE of the difficulties which a young Christian sometimes meets is this : "How do I know that the Bible is really what it professes to be? How do I know that it shows me the way of duty and the way to heaven?" Sometimes such a question will come into the mind as a doubt. Sometimes it will be asked by some one who desires to get you into the dark. And I am very glad to devote this talk to answering such questions, because some of you have already been met by those who ask them; and perhaps you have been troubled because you could not answer to your own satisfaction, or theirs.

Now, I don't suppose that your answer would do such persons very much good, for

frequently they are cavillers and are dishonest. There is a testimony in the heart which says that we ought to serve God, and they have not obeyed that voice of duty. So they are trying to find arguments against God's word to silence the voice of conscience. If they can ask you questions which you cannot answer they are greatly comforted, although it is no sign that they know anything about the subject. I have known a child three years old to ask questions which no wise man could answer.

I have another reason for wishing to help you answer such questions. It is this: If such questions are asked, and you do not know the answer, it is likely to make you doubt in your own minds. You may begin to say: "I believe this is the word of God; but I can't tell why I believe it. Why should I believe it when I don't know anything about its history, how it was written, or when it was given to the world?"

And, on the other hand, if you can give at once an intelligent reason for your faith, every time you do so that faith will be greatly strengthened. It will help you, and keep you from getting into doubt, although it may not help the objector, if you can give a reason for your faith. It is for your own sakes, therefore, to help you to be intelligent in these matters, and to keep you from doubt, that I try to help you answer such questions. And you know the apostle says "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you." I. Pet. iii., 15.

Some people talk as though we must be willing to shut our eyes, and take these statements as if we were blind, if we would be Christians. On the contrary, our Lord would have us open our eyes and look at facts intelligently. He would help us to see, as He opened the eyes of the blind men who came to Him. Ignorance in reference to

these things is alone to be dreaded. The more we know of these facts the more reason will we have to cling to our blessed Bible—the more shall we see that it is the very word of God to man.

I remember very well how these things appeared to me shortly after my conversion. I did not doubt the truth of God's word; I did not doubt that it was inspired—I accepted it. But I had never given any attention to these things, and I had no intelligent notion of how God gave the Bible to the world. If I had been asked why I accepted it, I could only have said, "I have an inner conviction that it is true." I had an indefinite idea that somehow God wrote it, or told men how to write it, and then handed it, ready-made to the world. If any infidel had encountered me with questions about these things I should have been in the dark at once. I long felt the need of such help as I shall try to give you here to-night.

Of course, I can't give you a complete history of the Bible in twenty minutes. That would require volumes. But I want to give you a few facts which may be easily remembered, and one argument for the truth of the Old Testament which seems to me sufficient for every honest mind.

And first, we must remember that this Bible did not come straight from the hands of God as we have it now—all in one large volume. I heard the other day of a young man who thought he knew all about the matter, who was telling, out of his abundant wisdom, that thousands of years ago there were many sacred books; that the Bible was only one of them, and that the people got together and chose which should be the sacred book of the people! And so the Bible was chosen by a kind of vote, instead of some other sacred book, and that is how it happens to have so much influence to-day!

Such talk as that only reveals the depth of its author's ignorance. It shows that he

knows nothing about the way in which the Bible originated. Besides that, we are to remember that no such process could give the Bible or any other book influence. Any book will have just such influence as its merit can command. If a new book of poems is issued it may have a few readers at first out of curiosity; but if it is published and republished for centuries, it will be because there is some genuine merit in it.

So the Bible has a wider influence throughout the world than any other book. That influence lasts and keeps on growing from generation to generation, and from century to century, through thousands of years. No vote or choice of any body of people a thousand or two thousand years ago could give the book any influence now. The only reason why that influence continues longer and spreads more widely than that of any other book in the world is that the Bible has a great value which no

other book in the world ever had. If it had not its influence could not continue to spread as it does. The doctrine of inspiration would not help it any if it had not a great and genuine value. If the Bible did not do for the world what it professes, if it did not make people better, if it did not comfort the sorrowing, encourage the weak, and lift up the fallen; if it did not change people for the better, no doctrine of inspiration would help it. People would very soon find out that it was a fraud, and would let it alone. It would have been forgotten ages ago. There wouldn't have been any need of translators and printing presses to help circulate the Bible in every language of the world to-day. It is because people find that the Bible does help them that they want it and keep on demanding it. It helps men and women to reform their lives and gives them hope of heaven; it points out how people can have peace with God, and how we

can stand with joy in His presence. Therefore it is that people keep on demanding it.

People see that wherever the Bible has gone, there things are changed for the better. Once, as you know, our mother country, England, was inhabited by barbarians, half-naked savages, who slew each other for human offerings to their idols. The Bible was taken to the British Isles. Its truths were preached there, and all the barbarisms were changed to what we see at present. At one time Britain was as barbarous as Central Africa is to-day. The Bible has only begun to be carried into the center of Africa, and has only begun to influence a few tribes, so they are barbarians there still. The same change goes everywhere with the Bible. The Sandwich Islands and the Micronesian Islands have been and are being changed in the same way by the Bible.

Now, it is because people see these great changes going on by means of the Bible that

they love it. They see changes in individuals, in families, and in nations. Wherever the Bible has not come there you find people at best only part civilized. Wherever it has been received, there you find them at the front. It is because the Bible has in it something which does the great work of changing and comforting human hearts that people love it the world around. No other book ever written has had the power to change men. Remember that, young people, when some one asks you why you love the Bible. It isn't some vote of some body of men hundreds of years ago, nor alone because of the belief in inspiration, that people love the Bible, but because it satisfies their souls and reforms their lives as no other book.

If some one were to come with a medicine which he should claim was inspired, and if every one who took the medicine should die, people wouldn't keep on taking the

medicine, no matter how many should claim that it was inspired. But if they should find that the medicine was a sure cure; that it really did what was claimed for every one who took it, they would keep on taking it. So people love the Bible and keep on studying it, because it does for the world just what it professes. You can know how much attention to pay to those who say that the Bible is kept before the people because of its claim to be inspired. We do believe it is inspired, but what makes us believe it? Would we keep on believing it inspired if it should deceive us in matters which we test daily?

And there are ways in which we can tell in this life whether it deceives or not. By its fruits we know. It says that wherever it goes there will be light. Is that true? Have the nations where it has gone been made better or worse by it? There is our answer. Point to the fruits. Ask why

it is that so many millions keep on reading the Bible. Ask why it is that every nation where it has gone has been made better by it. Ask whether millions upon millions—among them the best scholars in the world—could be deceived into thinking that the Bible makes them better if it did not really make them better.

But I was to tell you how the Bible came into the world. It did not come all at one time. It was not written by the hand of God and then put into the hands of men; but it was a growth, according to the needs of the people. It was written in different parts or books, by different men, in different ages of the history of God's people. The different men who were called of God to write the different parts of the Old Testament were chosen from time to time during more than a thousand years. Moses was the first. He wrote the first five books of the Old Testament about one thousand four

hundred and fifty years before Christ. Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, was inspired to write out his prophecy about four hundred years before Christ. So you see we have the books of the Old Testament written during a period of a thousand years by numerous persons, scattered all the way through that long period.

To illustrate: When the children of Israel came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea there was no written Bible. But God was then calling them to do a great work as His people, and the things about to happen—God's wonderful revelation on Mount Sinai, and his providences in crossing the sea and in the wilderness—would be of great consequence to all the ages following. So Moses was inspired to make a record of all those things. He went up into the mount and there talked with God, and God gave him there His holy law. Well, when that record of the journey

out of Egypt and through the wilderness was written, the people had one book of the Bible—*Exodus*. The meaning of that word is *going out from*. The book of Exodus is the inspired history of the Israelites going out from Egypt. In the same connection, directed also by the inspiring Spirit of God, Moses wrote out the history of the beginning of the world, and the people received that book in written form at or nearly the same time. *Genesis* means *beginning*. The book of Genesis is the inspired history of the beginning of the world.

So also, when Moses had written out a full account of the law given him by Almighty God in the mount, there was another book of the Bible—*Leviticus*. The things revealed in that book related principally to the Levites and priests, and so it is named *Leviticus*. Then comes the book of *Numbers*, which takes its name from the *numbering* of the tribes. The book of *Joshua* comes a few

years later, and is the inspired record of what the Israelites did by divine guidance, under the leadership of Joshua. So an explanation could be given of the circumstances under which every one of the books of the Old Testament was written.

The prophets did not all prophecy at one time. God sent one at one time and another at another time, and they were instructed by inspiration to write out the things which were shown them by the revealing Spirit. Isaiah, for instance, living about seven hundred and fifty years before Christ, was shown by the revealing Spirit of God, some things which were to happen to the Israelites very soon and other things which should happen hundreds of years after. He described the life and death of Christ in that wonderful fifty-third chapter more than seven hundred years before Christ came. And he described his life, work, and death almost as minutely as he could have done if he had

lived in Jerusalem when Christ suffered and died there.

So of the other prophets. Each had his time and place and circumstances when he wrote and spoke by divine guidance. Daniel prophesied and wrote down his prophesies in and near the great city of Babylon over five hundred years before Christ. You know he was one of the Jewish captives who had been carried away from Jerusalem with thousands of others. God chose him as the great prophet and religious teacher of those captives. Ezekiel was another who prophesied still earlier among them. All of these books were written out from time to time, by divine direction, to help the religious life of the people. Most of the prophesies were both *uttered* and written by the prophets.

You may ask how the people knew whether these men were inspired. It would be enough for us to know that the divine authority of

the books of the Old Testament was never questioned by the Jews. They had all of the reasons which the natural heart can invent for desiring to escape from the authority of the prophets. Sin was as tempting then as now. Moreover, they had right at hand the means of investigating every claim. There were frequent times of apostasy when they would have overthrown the authority of the Scriptures if they could. In one age they could look up to the mount where God, amid thunder and lightning, spoke to Moses; at another time God opened the sea and again the river for them. Then, again, they could see the signs of his presence in the pillar of cloud and of fire. They surely would not have any occasion to doubt that the things spoken by Moses, whom God called to go up into the cloud, were really God's will.

So, during the time of the prophets, there were ways of testing the word spoken. The

prophets foretold some things which were hundreds of years in the future, and they foretold others that would happen in a single generation, so that hundreds then living could test the matter. Sometimes the things which they foretold, as in some of Jeremiah's prophecies, happened only a few months after. And these were facts which no man could have foreseen unless God by his Spirit revealed them unto the prophet.

When the faithful Jew saw that God's Spirit was with a man, and that the things foretold were actually coming to pass, he knew that God was speaking through that man. He knew that the things spoken in reference to the distant future were also from God. So these various books, having all been spoken and then written, were carefully gathered into one volume. That was done nearly or quite four hundred years before Christ came. So that the Old Testament Scriptures were the same as we have now when Christ came to the earth.

Now, it becomes a most interesting thing to notice how the Savior of the world treated the Scriptures. If there had been anything wrong about them he would surely have said so plainly. But instead we find him quoting from them and referring to them as the sacred words of God again and again. And then he said plainly, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." This is Christ's positive endorsement of the whole Old Testament Scriptures. I will tell you in a future talk how the books of the New Testament were also written, by divine inspiration, and how the whole Bible came together, by divine providence, into the form of the volume which we now have. There is a way in which we may know, just as we know any other facts, that the Bible is truly from God—His inspired book. And I shall tell you of that in future talks.

III.

HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT DEVELOPED.

WE have seen how the Old Testament was a growth; how its different books were given by inspiration, one after another, according to the needs of God's people, through more than a thousand years. This evening we will look for a little time at the way in which God gave the New Testament to the world.

For nearly four hundred years, after the last of the prophets, Malachi, the world had been without any person inspired to add anything to the sacred volume. The Old Testament was complete. Its prophecies of glories to be revealed had been uttered and were waiting for fulfillment. Then came Christ. Out of His perfect life was to grow

another and final portion of the inspired book, more precious than all which had preceded it, because a clearer and more complete revelation of God's will. It was to be that portion of the divine word which should inspire future saints to sing:

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in Thy word;
But in Thy life the law appears,
Drawn out in living characters."

The New Testament is the mirror in which we behold the life of Christ reflected. In that we see divine law living and moving in divine love.

But the New Testament did not come complete in its present form from the hand of God. Like the Old Testament it was a growth, controlled by divine inspiration.

Christ Jesus lived His beautiful life, and spoke His undying words into the ears and hearts of His disciples and the common throng. Then, when all things were ful-

filled according to the Law and Prophets, He went away again into His home of light. The only words, which there is any record of His ever writing, He wrote *on the ground*. He left not a volume; He inscribed no monument; and yet he was bold enough to declare: "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall never pass away." Cities and empires have gone down since then; but the words of Christ, not one of which was then written, still remain. No other teacher ever dared to assert that his words would endure forever; or, if he did, he was instantly judged to be insane. But Christ spake with the composure and assurance of One who saw all the future and who knew all the past. He saw distant ages and mighty empires, whose gentle civilizations and whose humane laws should be molded by His words. He spake as One seeing the invisible. We live, young people, in the midst of the things about which He spake.

We are here to-night to talk about the book which contains the *words* of Christ. We live in an age whose world-wide charities and whose mighty reforms of hoary abuses have all sprung from the words of Christ. Was he not in very deed a Prophet?

For several years after the crucifixion the apostles preached Christ and quoted His words from the loving memories of their hearts. We cannot tell just how long it was before the first part of the New Testament was written out. The things which we know with certainty make that a matter of small consequence. As I shall explain to you in a future talk, we know with certainty that nearly or quite all of the New Testament was written before the close of the first century. We know with equal certainty that at least three of the Gospels were written before the destruction of Jerusalem. These facts are quite sufficient, when taken in connection with others which I shall mention, to make

it certain that God must have had something to do with the making of the book. Written at so early a date, it must have told the truth or thousands would have risen up to deny it. There were no denials for a century or more. But, if it is true, then it is divine. I shall speak of that more fully hereafter.

It may be that the Divine Spirit came in the way of an entirely natural suggestion to Matthew, saying to him, "Matthew, why don't you write out these precious memories which are now so fresh in your mind? Future generations will worship Him whom you call 'Master.' Give them a picture of His life and a record of His words." Then when the apostle began to write, that Spirit which Christ had promised, brought perfectly to his memory the words and deeds which he wished to record. When Matthew had written, if he was, as is supposed, the first to publish the story of Jesus, the world had

the first portrait of a perfect character which had ever been contributed to its literature.

Then, perhaps, next in the order of time, follows the account, or, as we call it, the Gospel of Mark. Mark was not one of the twelve, but he was the friend and companion of Peter. When he wrote he had in mind, doubtless, many facts and precious memories to which he had so often heard his illustrious and inspired friend refer. Probably he had at his call the human help which Peter could render, as well as the higher assistance of the Divine Spirit.

Thus, one after another, at different times and in widely different places, the four gospels were published to the world. Matthew's gospel was, probably, first published in Palestine; Mark's, perhaps, and even, probably, in Rome; Luke's in Achaia or Asia Minor, and John's at Ephesus.

In these different accounts we see not only how the same events impressed different

minds; and how each was led to record some things not recorded by the others; but, above all, we see how every mind received the same overwhelming impression of Christ's perfect character. Four travelers may give accounts of some grand mountain. One approaches it from the north, and he gives us an account of its sterner aspect. Another sees it from the south, and behold! it is covered with warmth and sunshine. The others tell each his story, and in each there is something both new and true ; but, in one respect they will give the same impression: They will all tell us how lofty and how grand the mountain is. Such are the four different accounts of Christ's life.

Each of these writers records certain words in which the Lord sent the apostles forth to preach and, assured them that they should have very remarkable power. They should be able to work miracles; they should be miraculously protected in certain respects

from bodily harm; they should preach with irresistible power, and they should have given them what they should say when they were suddenly called before rulers for Christ's sake.

The years went by. The apostles went forth and preached in different cities through the empire. They obeyed their Lord. Did He keep His word with them? Were they able to work miracles? Was their preaching successful?

The time came, after a few years, when it could be said to the apostles, as Joshua had said to the Israelites centuries before: "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

It was interesting and important that the record of their deeds should be preserved for the Church of the future. So the Lord put it into the heart of Luke to write *The*

Acts of the Apostles. Thus another book of the New Testament was written.

As churches multiplied they needed instruction and encouragement. But the inspired apostles could not be present with them all in person. Hence they wrote letters, advising in their difficulties and illustrating the doctrines of the gospel. These letters or epistles were added one after another to the volume of sacred truth.

Thus one book of the New Testament after another was given to the world, until all of its parts, in the common manuscript form of those days, were widely circulated.

In time, the Churches were interested to collect these various parts of the sacred writings into one complete volume. Justin Martyr, who was a disciple of the apostle John, in his letter to the emperor, mentions a custom of reading from parts of the New Testament, which had become general as early as the year 140. To establish such a

custom may have required thirty or forty years. This takes us back to the time of the apostle John. Thus, during the last years of this apostle's life, the practice of reading from the New Testament publicly as a part of divine service had probably begun. At all events the evidence is abundant that the separate books of the New Testament were early collected into their present form. Commentaries and gospel harmonies were written, and translations of them into different languages were made, in the primitive ages of Christianity. Origen, one of the Church fathers, living only eighty-five years after Saint John, gives, from separate sources, twelve different lists of books of the New Testament, all of course made prior to that time. They had been prepared by representative councils of the Church or by eminent scholars in different parts of the empire. Thus early was God's Word recognized in its completeness and its authority revered.

Thus, my friends, we have seen, in merest outline, how God's Word, both of the Old and New Testaments, grew up, one part after another, as He unfolded His purposes of mercy and kindness, first to His ancient people and through them to us all. Like the opening of some beautiful flower, was this unfolding of the thoughts of our Father's heart—each stage of it beautiful and fragrant, each more beautiful and more fragrant than the one before, 'till the full glory was displayed, and the fragrance began to fill the world.

IV.

"WHY DO YOU BELIEVE IT?"

THERE is nothing like a ready knowledge of the Word of God to help a young Christian in the temptations which are sure to come. It is well to carry a copy of it with you whenever you can. You will find spare minutes during the day when you can look into it, and the verse which you catch will help you. I am happy to see the habit which you are forming of having your Bibles with you.

It is because I esteem the Bible so essential to your Christian life that I wish you to have an intelligent faith in it—a faith which no question of any infidel can overturn. I want you to be able to give a reason for your faith in God's holy Word. If you go to it in your trials; if you prayerfully seek

guidance and help in God's Word, you will have the very strongest reason for faith which could be given to your own soul. You will find there the help which you need. If my wagon is stuck in the mud and some strong man helps me lift it out, I don't need anything else to satisfy me that he is a strong man. If I am in the dark and someone brings a light, I don't need any argument to show me that he is just the friend I need at such a time.

Well, God's Word is just like that, "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." It will help us when we are stuck in the mud, as poor Christian was in the story, you remember. It will bring us light when we are in darkness. O! learn, my friends, to go straight to the Word of God in every difficulty. My hope for any young Christian is in proportion as he or she loves the Word of God.

Does any question of the Christian life come up? Take it to the Word of God.

Any temptation? Go to the Word. And in the Word you will find a promise which you can plead in prayer, or a rule which you can apply in your life. And when God's Word has helped you in that way, you will feel "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

But, in some hour of darkness, when you are least prepared for it, temptation may come in this way, "Now, how do you know this *is* God's Word? It was not revealed to you: how do you know that it is inspired at all? How do you know but that it was written by someone a thousand years after Christ? How do you know it is as ancient as it professes to be? How do you know that the things written in it are true?"

When such temptations come, breathe a prayer that God may help you. Remember how God's Word has helped you in times of darkness before. Remember that it helped you when all human help failed.

But it is reasonable that you should understand that we can know that the things spoken in the Bible are true, just the same as we can know any truths of history. If you ever spend time in investigating you will very soon become satisfied that the truths of the Bible can be more fully proven than almost any other historic truths.

Let me illustrate: We know that such a man as Socrates lived in Greece. No one doubts that; no one denies it. But there is more proof that Jesus Christ lived and was crucified by the Jews, than there is that Socrates lived in Athens and was poisoned by the rulers of that city. The proof that I now speak of is entirely aside from the Bible. The fact can be established just as we establish any other historic fact, by investigating the writings and the testimony of those who lived at that time. There were Roman historians, who lived at, or not long after that time, and they speak of the life and death of

Christ. There was Josephus, who wrote at length of many of the facts connected with the life, death, and especially the words of Christ. Josephus was a Jew. He was born only a few years after the crucifixion of Christ and wrote about forty years later.

I told you in a previous chapter how the Old Testament Scriptures were written by many authors from the time of Moses, onward, through a thousand years, and how the sacred writings then stopped with Malachi, nearly four hundred years before Christ came to earth. I showed you that the Jews had the Old Testament, complete, before the coming of Christ. Then I read you those words of Christ in which He commands us to "Search the Scriptures," showing that he regarded them all as divine in their authority. He proved His own Messiahship—that he was the very Christ—by referring again and again to the Old Testament.

On the authority of Christ, therefore, we know that the Old Testament is inspired and holy. There are other ways by which we know the same thing, but I want to get this way clearly before you so that you will never forget it ; so that you can recall it in a moment if any disputer assails the Old Testament. Say to him, " My Lord and Savior, Christ, endorsed the Old Testament, and tells me to search it as a guide to eternal life, and that's enough for me." You hold that by the whole authority of the word of Christ.

But suppose he should ask: " How do you know that the word of Christ amounts to anything ? " Well, young people and friends, I would answer that, first of all, by saying, " I know it by what Christ has done for me. I know it because I was a sinner, condemned by God's law, and He took away my burden and forgave my sins. You obey Him and you will know as well as I." That's

as far as it will pay to go with one who denies and cavils at the word of Christ.

But, for your own sakes and your own instruction and help, I say to you there is an answer to every such question which will satisfy any honest mind; an answer which can be understood just as we understand a fact in history or geography. We know Christ's authority by the New Testament.

What Nicodemus said is evidently true. No man could do such works as Christ did "except God were with him." We know, therefore, that he was a Teacher who came from God; for no one could raise the dead and heal the blind unless the power of God were with him. We know that God wouldn't help any man, nor send any man into the world, to tell lies. But we know that God was in Christ, helping him, or he couldn't have raised the dead. Therefore we know that every word which Christ spoke was true; because it had that wonderful testi-

mony: He was able to raise the dead. Now, what do we know? Why, Christ declares again and again that He is the world's Redeemer. He declares that He is the Son of God; that He has a divine nature; that He and the Father are *one*; that all things, both in heaven and earth, are under His control.

His word is established by His power to work miracles and, His Word declares that He is divine. That's all we want to know about His authority. When we reach that point we are ready to fall at his feet, as Thomas did, and say, "My Lord and my God."

When he sends us to the Scriptures we know that they are inspired, for He, himself, is God who inspired them. He wouldn't send us to any Scriptures which are not inspired.

It's a good thing, friends, for us to go where Christ sends us. We shall be better each time we search the Scriptures with honest and prayerful hearts.

But now you ask, for your own intelligence and satisfaction, "How do I know that the New Testament is what it pretends to be? You have shown me, beyond doubt, one unanswerable reason for knowing that the Old Testament is inspired; but how may I know intelligently that the New Testament is inspired? I perceive at once that everything depends on that; for the New Testament contains the life of Christ, and, according to our present argument, the inspiration of the Old Testament depends on the word of Christ."

If you will follow me, I will try to tell you how we know these things. But we can, I think, get at the answer to all by answering another question.

Suppose you should ask me, "How may I know but the New Testament was written only three or four hundred years ago?" It claims to have been written eighteen hundred years ago or more. If it were written

by some person or persons only three or five or eight hundred years ago, then, of course, it is not reliable. But if, on the contrary, we can find to a certainty that it was written when it professes, then it is a strong reason, though not the only one, for believing that it is true. For nobody could publish such things as the stories contained in the New Testament and send them successfully all over the Roman Empire, if they were false; because thousands of persons would rise up and say, "That's not true; I was at Jerusalem at the Passover, and there was no such crucifixion. I was at Jerusalem, and that's not true; that person called Jesus did not rise up from the sepulchre." And another would say, "That's false; I was at Bethany, and Lazarus was not raised from the dead." Another would say, "I lived in Galilee, near Lake Gennesaret, and I never heard about Jesus feeding over five thousand people with a few loaves before." And another would

say, "That book called 'Acts of the Apostles' is not true, for I was at Cesarea at the time mentioned, and there wasn't any prisoner there by the name of Paul, and there wasn't any speech-making before Felix and Agrippa. I'm sure I should have heard something about it if such a noted prisoner had been there over two years."

So it would be all through the Roman world, for the New Testament tells of things which happened in Ephesus and Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Athens, and Rome itself.

Don't you see if any book had been circulated in those cities, while those men were still living, they would at once deny its statements if they were untrue? And there were a great many learned men who were capable of writing against the New Testament. So if it were not true we should certainly find a great many books written against it by those men who must have been

alive at the time; for many of them were enemies of Christianity, and would surely have denied if they could. Do you not see how that must be true? We find many books and fragments of books written at that time, but not one denying the New Testament till more than a century later. After all of the people of that generation were dead, then the denials began. Why didn't hundreds and thousands rise up when the New Testament was first circulated, and deny what it claimed? There were more than a million in Jerusalem at the time when it claims Christ was crucified. Why didn't some of them afterwards dispute the record? Why didn't some one deny the miracles? Why didn't some one dispute the truth of the conversion of the three thousand at the day of Pentecost? Many would have been glad to do so, for the new faith was spreading very rapidly and they wanted to stop it. The reason why they didn't dispute the

facts, therefore, was that they knew, and every one knew, that these things were so. They couldn't dispute them or they certainly would.

So you see if there is certain proof that the New Testament was written eighteen hundred years ago, as it claims, then the proof is equally certain that the record must be absolutely true, although this is only one of many proofs.

So you see, also, why I want to show you, as I can so easily, that the New Testament was surely written eighteen hundred years, or more, ago.

If you were to go up to one of our newspaper offices you would find what they call a "file" of that paper—bound volumes of the paper reaching back for thirty or forty years. Now, suppose I want to find out how long a certain prominent citizen, say the Mayor of this city, has been a resident here, I look through last year's volume, and I find

his name occurring here and there all along through. Well, I know he was here before that, for the paper wouldn't refer to him as a citizen before he became a citizen here. So I go back into the volume for the year previous, and I find his name scattered along through that. Here it is said he bought a piece of property, and there is an item about his moving into a certain house, and so on. "Oh," I say, "he was here before that." So I follow along back through the record for twenty or twenty-five years, until at last I find what year he came into town. Back of that he will probably not be mentioned at all; certainly not as a citizen. So I can trace through the record to the very year when he came.

In the same way I can trace back through the records and literature of nations to the time of Christ, and to the time when the New Testament was written. Nearly every book of consequence which has been written

since the time of Christ, whether it is on law, or philosophy, or history, or art, has something to say about Christ or Christianity, and some quotation from the New Testament. I go back one hundred years, and I find books of poetry, and history, and art, with quotations from the New Testament. Well, I know that the New Testament must have been written before that. I go back a thousand years and I find dusty old books which were written a thousand years ago by poets and historians, and I find in them and all the books between, constant references to Christ who was crucified at Jerusalem, and constant quotations from the New Testament, sometimes from one part and sometimes from another. So I know that the New Testament must have been written more than a thousand years ago, because no one could quote from a book until after it was written. The newspapers won't speak of the Mayor as a citizen until after he comes to

town. So I go on back, century after century, and I can find quotations and references to the New Testament in books which no one questions, as far back as the very year in which some of those books were written, during the first century, less than a generation after Christ was crucified. Well, I know that the New Testament must have been written, in part, at least, as early as that, because these persons could not quote it until after it was written. Beyond that there are no quotations, because there was no New Testament to quote from. It is like our search through the Mayor's record. Beyond a certain point there were no references, because he hadn't moved into town. Well, when we get back as far as the record entirely outside of the Bible takes us, where are we? Why, we are almost or quite back to the very date where the New Testament claims to have been written. I could give you the names of authors all the way along through the centuries, who quote from the New Testament.

In one of our campaigns, during the war, we struck out through a dense forest, with only the slightest trail and no road to guide us. A few engineers went ahead with a compass and put a certain mark on the trees. A few days after our whole command started in and we went confidently through that forest. As far back into the forest as we found that mark there we knew our engineers had been. So, my friends, as far back into the centuries as we can find the mark of the New Testament there we know the New Testament has been. How far back does that mark go? It goes back a little more than eighteen hundred years, to the very time when the New Testament claims it was written. So, if any one ever starts up and tells you that the New Testament was forged by some one only a few centuries ago, tell him you know better, and tell him how you know. Tell him you know it has blazed its way in nearly all the books of consequence that have been written for the past eighteen hundred years.

V.

ILL TELL YOU WHY.

LET me help you recall the facts established in the previous talks.

1. The Old Testament was complete when Christ came. He endorsed it entire, proving his Messiahship from it, and commending it as a guide to eternal life.

2. Christ worked miracles. Miracles could not be wrought except by the help of God. God would not help an untruthful person. Christ said He was the Messiah—the Son of God.

3. We know what Christ's testimony was and what His work was by the New Testament.

4. We know the New Testament is true, just as we know any history. It can be traced back to the very time when it claims

to have been written, just as you would trace a man's record through an old file of papers. And I showed you how, since it was written when it claims, many would have denied the things claimed for Christ if they were not true. But there was no denial. No such document has come down to us. And we know the truths of the Bible by the experience which every believer has. Its truths do for him just what they claim. He becomes a better man by believing in God's holy Word, and it makes better nations of those people who receive it.

But you may be interested to know a little more particularly how we can trace backward through history, step by step, till we come to the very age when the New Testament was written. I am more than glad to answer. There are several independent ways by which you would reach the same place,—all of them lying along through the different lines of history and literature.

For instance, take the history of the Greek Church. You should know that the primitive Church early divided into two branches, east and west, Greek and Roman. Both of these great Churches became corrupt, although many good things remain. But the thing to which I call your attention is this: each of them has a literature and a history reaching back century upon century, just as distinctly and easily traced as the years of your life, to the time of the apostles. Many of those claimed as fathers of the Greek Church and of the Roman Church, were only a little removed from the apostles themselves—lived and talked with those who lived and talked with the apostles ; and the apostles lived and talked with Christ, and wrote most of the New Testament.

What is the Greek Church? Is it some little society whose history might easily be obscure? O! no; it is the national church of the whole Russian empire to-day. It has

the same New Testament that you and I have, and it can trace its own history back to the days when the New Testament was written. So with the Roman Catholic Church. There are many things in the Romish Church which we think are wrong, and, therefore, we are Protestants. We protest against the abuses which have grown up, against the power which has been assumed by men to forgive sins—power which belongs only to God. But, notwithstanding all the abuses, the Roman Church has the same New Testament that we have, and she can trace backward along the links of her own history to the days when the apostles were on earth.

Now, you know how we can trace backward till we come to the beginning of the history of this government. We can go back from President Cleveland to President Arthur; from Arthur to Garfield; from Garfield to Hayes; from Hayes to Grant, and

so on. And we feel just as safe when reading the things done by Washington, who died before we were born, as we do in reading about those which happened only a few years ago, because these things have been recorded in history. We know that each generation has examined the record which its own historians made, and from which we gather our facts.

So we can go back from the history of our own government to that of England—back to George III., and Cromwell, and Charles I., and James I., and so on back, from one ruler to another, till we come to the time when England was inhabited by barbarians. We know a great many things about these old barbarians of two thousand years ago, and of the Angles and Saxons, who, but little less barbarous, drove them northward into the Scottish hills. Well, in just the same way these two old churches, the Roman and the Greek, having the same New Testa-

ment that we have, can trace backward, from one bishop to the one who preceded him, and so on almost to the very times when the New Testament was written. According to their authorities, the history of each goes quite back to the apostles themselves. These bishops and preachers could not have had the New Testament before it was written, so we know it was written at the time it claims, because they all preached from it and wrote about it, and their books, to the number of many thousands, are scattered all the way through the centuries, back to the very time of the apostles.

Without giving any particular illustrations, I told you in the last chapter how we could trace the writings of the New Testament back to the very time when it claims to have been written. I illustrated in a general way by the search through the files of a newspaper for a man's record. But you can go back through all literature, for more than eighteen

hundred years, and find references to things which are recorded in the New Testament. So we know that these things were done at least eighteen hundred years ago.

If, in looking up the history of George Washington, you could find references to him back through our history for sixty years only, you would say there had been some mistake. You would say: "George Washington could not have won the war for independence over a hundred years ago, or we should find accounts of that great fact more than sixty years old. Such is the case. We can find accounts of the fact written the very year that the British surrendered. All the way along since, people have been writing histories, stories and songs about the great fact. So, concerning the great facts of the New Testament,—the birth of Christ, His crucifixion, His resurrection, and His miracles. Ever since the time when these things were done by Christ in Judæa and Galilee,

people have been writing about them, and singing hymns about them, and we have copies of these hymns and histories. We know when they were written. We know that people could not be writing and singing about facts of the New Testament until after the New Testament was written. So we can go up, step by step, through these facts in history and literature, like ascending a ladder, until we reach the very date when the New Testament was written.

For instance, Milton's great poem, *Paradise Regained*, was based on the New Testament. We know when Milton wrote that. It was in 1671. So we would know that the New Testament must have been older than the year 1671. Martin Luther's great Reformation was arousing all Europe more than a hundred years before that. But the Reformation was based on the New Testament doctrine of Faith, and books were as thick as Autumn leaves, in that age, which

told about the facts of the New Testament. So it must have been older than that. Back through the dark ages you go, finding hundreds of books written during a thousand years about the New Testament. Hence the New Testament must have been older than the Dark Ages. You go back to the times of Tacitus, a Roman historian, who wrote about 90 A. D., less than sixty years after Christ was crucified. You find him telling how rapidly Christianity had spread. You must remember that he himself was a Roman pagan and a friend of the Roman emperor. He tells us that Christianity had spread so rapidly that Christians had become numerous even in Rome. He tells how the emperor persecuted them, tying some of them up in sacks, naked, with poisonous reptiles; how he covered others with pitch and tar, and burned them as torches. Now you will see how that agrees with the New Testament, which tells us that the gospel

was carried through Asia Minor, even to Rome.

All of which shows, on the testimony of a pagan, that the truths of the New Testament were preached widely through the Roman empire less than sixty years after Christ was crucified. To have accomplished such results as Tacitus recognizes, must have taken time. In his time converts were numerous throughout the empire. When Christ was crucified there was one little band at Jerusalem. Such results could not be brought about in much less than sixty years.

VI.

"THE JEWS, YOUR MAJESTY."

A RAILROAD accident once compelled me to ride a number of miles in a conveyance with several other passengers who, like myself, had shared in the disaster. I found myself in company with a young Jew who sat on the same seat with me. He was intelligent on general matters, inclined to be agreeable and chatty, so we soon fell into a pleasant conversation. Yankees are said to be inquisitive; so are some Jews. At all events that young man soon found out that I was a preacher, and our talk took a religious turn forthwith. He was inclined to be rather positive in his statements, and was very strong in his opinion that there wasn't much in my religion. As a clincher to what he had said he wanted to know how many

Jews we had ever succeeded in winning to the Christian Faith. Well, I was compelled to admit that the number of Jewish Christians is very small. It is true that Jews, as a rule, are very tenacious of their views.

I did not answer him sarcastically as I might have done. I did not remind him how his fathers had said of Christ, "His blood be on us and on our children," and how their holy city was very soon afterwards utterly destroyed; how thousands and hundreds of thousands were slain with the sword or died a violent death in the very city where they had cried out, "His blood be on us and on our children," only a few years before. I did not remind him that his nation, though wonderfully preserved in all of its race characteristics, has been a nation of wanderers on the face of the earth ever since. I might have told him all these things. But he was in no condition to be benefitted by such a bitter reminder, and I tried to follow that

suggestion which says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath."

I rarely see any Jew but I remember that here is a descendant of that race which was once the chosen people of God. The blood of Abraham is in his veins. He may be descended from David's royal line. Kings and priests have gone before him, and God's promises, rich and free, are yet to be fulfilled unto his race.

The fact is, too, that every Jew whom you meet is a living fulfillment of some things which are written in God's holy Word. If you know what the Bible says about that ancient and honorable people it adds to your interest every time you meet one of them. And I want to direct your attention to some of these things which are written in the Bible this evening.

Now let us remember what we have been considering on previous evenings.

If you have followed what I have said in the last two talks you have seen how strong

and unanswerable is the proof, that the Bible was written entire, as we have it, nearly or quite eighteen hundred years ago; and that the Old Testament was completed nearly four hundred years before that. Thus we know that every word which we find written in the Old Testament was certainly written there as long as twenty-two hundred or more years ago.

If we find any exact description there of people and events which are happening every day, what do we know? We know that when those words were written they were certainly prophecy. Who of us can tell exactly what will happen to-morrow? Not one. We know many things which will *probably* happen to-morrow. We are not *certain* of any. Much less can we tell what will happen a year from now; still less what will happen a generation from now. And who would be rash enough to risk a guess about what will be transpiring to cer-

tain people three thousand years from now? Suppose we should try to write out what would be the history of the descendants of certain families sixty years from now? You know very well it would only be guess-work, and not one guess in a hundred would come out right. The people whom we would think of as being rich sixty years from now would possibly be found in the poor-house. The children of him whom we esteem only as a plodder and an ignoramus, may be in professors' chairs. The children of the heiresses of to-day may wash for a living sixty years from now. We can't tell. Our prophecies would be guess-work and our guesses would be like the weather guesses of poor Mr. Vennor, hot when they should be cold, and wet when they should be dry. But the strange fact about things foretold in the Bible, some of them eighteen hundred and some of them three thousand years ago, is that *they all come true!* If one of our

guesses thirty years ahead should turn out true—even if one out of a hundred or a thousand—we should think it worth mentioning if we should remember it. We would call the attention of friends and neighbors to the fact. But here are things told in the Bible about times which were then future. Some of them were to come to pass in a few years; some in a century, and some not till a thousand or two thousand years should go by. Now surely it would be remarkable, if you and I, looking into any book and finding in it many prophecies of things thus to be done in the distant future, should find that half of those things had actually come true in history. Wouldn't it be really wonderful? I tell you, young people, no human being ever guessed as straight as that would be. But I have to tell you that every one of these things which the Bible said should be done by this time has actually come to pass, and some things which the Bible said

three thousand years ago should surely come, are being fulfilled before our eyes this very day.

If anyone wants to argue with you, it would be better as a rule to avoid it. But if he insists, just say, "Let us pray first," and get down on your knees with him and ask God to guide what you shall both say. Windy talk doesn't amount to much on either side. If he still wants to argue after you have prayed with him, then quietly ask him if he knows how numerous the prophecies of the Bible are. He will probably be a little confused. Tell him there are scores of them. Ask him if he knows how long ago some of them were spoken and written. He will be confused again. Tell him that some of them were uttered three or four thousand years ago, and that none of them were uttered less than eighteen hundred years ago. Then ask him if he ever heard of any person guessing correctly what

would happen three thousand years in the future. Ask him if he can point out one of these many Bible prophecies which has ever failed to come true, just as it said. He will be confused again. Then tell him that if he can find one that has failed in any part you will throw your Bible in the fire and be a disbeliever like himself.

I tell you, young people, you are perfectly safe in saying that every word which should be fulfilled at this time, is fulfilled. The trains are never late on God's railroad. They are always on time. The clock and calendar of God are always exact. If it could be proved that His Word had failed once, that would prove it was not His Word and I would not trust it, for God never fails.

Not one of his divine foretellings has ever failed. There are no blockades or collisions which can hinder the car of God. Look in your Bibles. Read the prophecies. Find if one has failed. If they haven't failed, if they

have all come true, then they are surely the words of God, for no man can guess every time, nor once in a thousand times, what will happen hundreds and thousands of years in the future.

Now let us return to our young friend the Jew. 'Tis a strange coincidence that we should make his acquaintance through a disaster, for his nation has been tossed and buffeted with disaster upon disaster for over eighteen hundred years. In America the Jews are free and honored citizens, like others. But in other lands it has not been so, and in some it is not so to-day. See how the Jews have been persecuted, robbed, butchered and driven about in Russia during the past four years. Well, that's only a sample of what has been going on, at different times, in every nation of Europe. In England the Jews have numbered ten or twelve different and cruel persecutions. In the third and fifth centuries thousands were

murdered in different parts of Europe. In the sixth century over twenty thousand of them were slain, and as many more sold for slaves. In Spain they have endured eight or ten fearful persecutions and other lesser ones between. So in France and Germany, scattered all through the centuries, there have been edicts banishing them, confiscating their property, permitting them to be robbed, beaten, and outraged. There is no European nation which has not joined in these atrocities, at one time or another, since the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now look into the face of our young friend here as we ride. You see at once that he is a Jew. You do not need to ask him; you know it. He is proud of it. It is his boast that he is a "son of Abraham." Now how is it that you can tell so easily? It is not because he is a foreigner just over. No; he was born in America and his father was born here before him. Yet he is as dis-

tinctly a Jew as if he had been born in Jerusalem at the time of Christ.

When you think of it that is very strange: for no other people can be told at sight in that way after they have been a few generations in this country. You can't tell of the first man you meet, whose fathers were born in America, whether his ancestors were French or German or Italian.

In fact you can't tell at sight, even a few years after they have come to this country, if they adopt our style of dress and living, whether they are Frenchmen or Germans or Englishmen. Especially you can't tell after two or three generations. In order to keep their race characteristics all other people are obliged to have a government, a nation, and a country; and they are obliged to stay in their own country, wearing their own peculiar dress, speaking their own peculiar language, obeying their own peculiar laws. Let them go anywhere else and they soon

become mingled and inseparable from the people among whom they are.

But in our young friend, whom we met at the railroad disaster, we have the representative of a race which for two thousand years has been scattered through all the earth; they have mingled with all peoples and mixed with none; they have learned to obey the laws of every nation but still continue to be a nation by themselves. They have learned every language of the earth, but whether you find them speaking the polite French, or the broad and solid German, or the barbarous dialects of Africa, or the strange jargon of China, they are still Jews. You can tell them at sight. They are wearing the dress of every nation to-day; but whether made up after French fashion plates, or clad in the flowing robes of the Orient, you could tell a Jew wherever you should meet him.

Other people taken away from their native land, even under conditions of prosperity,

cannot keep themselves separate more than a generation or two; but these people, driven and tossed, burned and beaten and plundered, having no government of their own for nearly two thousand years, have kept themselves so distinct that a child can tell a Jew wherever and whenever he sees one. And this is neither a reproach to the Jew nor a credit to the child of ten or twelve years. The peculiarities are so marked that the child must be very dull not to see them.

Now I am sure you will all agree with me in saying that the preservation of the Jewish race is one of the strangest things that ever happened. I think nothing in the affairs of this world has been more wonderful. But I am sure you will also agree with me in saying that it is still more wonderful if we can find that it was foretold thousands of years ago that this very thing should happen to the Jews. But that is just the fact. And I want you now to open your Bibles and mark

some places which I will point out to you, and if you are ever tempted to doubt, just open to one or two of these prophecies, and then look into the face of the next Jew whom you meet, and see how wonderfully these words are fulfilled. And when you read how they have been banished from one nation to another, how they have been whipped, burned, robbed, and butchered; when you read that these things are going on to-day in the great empire of Russia, when you remember that there were hundreds of years when the Jews scarcely had any civil rights in any nation of Europe, then think of these passages of prophecy and see how they have been fulfilled. When you see that, notwithstanding all these persecutions, they have increased and spread, and kept themselves separate in every nation on earth, then think what God said, through his prophets, should happen.

Now let us read Deuteronomy xxviii., 64-66, written about 1450 B. C.: "And the

Lord shall scatter them among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even of wood and stone.

"And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.

"And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee and thou shalt have fear day and night, and shalt have no assurance of thy life."

Hasn't that been literally fulfilled? Is it not now being fulfilled? Yet notwithstanding all this the Jews would not be cut off. Turn to Leviticus xxvi., 44. This book was written about fifteen hundred years before Christ. "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break

my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God." Though scattered from one end of the world to the other they shall still be preserved, as we see to-day.

Also read Jeremiah xlv. , 27 and 28, written about the year 600 B. C.: " But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid.

" Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord, for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in a measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished."

Now turn to that most wonderful of all these prophecies, written more than twenty-five hundred years ago, Hosea iii. , 4 and 5: " For the children of Israel shall abide many

days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."

The Jews have been over eighteen hundred years without a king and without a prince. The temple, which was the religious center for sacrifice and pilgrimage, has during all that time lain waste. But the Jews remain as the Lord said by the mouth of His prophet.

You can understand, in view of these facts, an answer which a great scholar once made to a great ruler. Frederick the Great once asked a learned man, "How can you give me in one sentence an unanswerable proof of the Bible?" The learned man simply answered, "The Jews, your majesty."

VII.

WHAT JESUS SAID AND WHAT TITUS DID.

THERE is a wonderful city in the East, which is now under the sway of the Turks. At one time or another it has been conquered by nearly or quite every great empire near to it. At one time it was taken by the Assyrians, at another by the Egyptians, at another by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and again, by the Romans under Titus. The history of that city alone would fill more volumes than the histories of some nations; and the many strange stories which could be told about it are as fascinating as a romance; while some of them are the most terrible and real tragedies that have ever been written. You will know before this that I mean Jerusalem, the once

beautiful center of the Jewish nation and of the Jewish religion.

I told you the other evening how the Jews are a living fulfillment of the things which God's Word foretold thousands of years ago. The history of their beloved and once lovely city, shows us many facts which are just as striking and quite as convincing in their proof of God's Word. I do not think that any honest person can read the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, or the twenty-first chapter of Luke, and then read the fifth and sixth books of Josephus' "Wars of the Jews," without being convinced that the words of Jesus Christ are divine.

As I shall ask you to open to those chapters presently, and look at Christ's wonderful prophecy of the overthrow of Jerusalem, you may naturally ask: "How do we know but these gospels were written after Jerusalem was destroyed, instead of before, as they claim?"

I have shown you, in a previous talk, how we know that the gospels were written in the first century. I now say that we can know, just as we do in reference to other historic books, the years within which they must have been written. Let me illustrate. Suppose someone, living before our great war, had written a book about the condition of things between the North and the South, and had pointed out that events were tending toward secession. Several such books were actually written. But there could not be any reference to things done in the war, because the war had not yet come. If no date were given and the author's name were lost, we should still know that his book was written before the war. Why? Because if the war was past he would certainly speak of it. Or, if he should try to deceive; if he should be writing since the war, and try to make people believe he had written before the war, the thing would be impossible. It

is just as impossible to do that as to take one man's picture when another man's face is before the camera. Some little sentence, or reference, or allusion would creep in which would show that the writer knew what had happened at Shiloh, or Chickamauga, or Gettysburg. No such deception of any extent has ever succeeded.

In the same way we know that the gospels of Matthew and Luke were written before the destruction of Jerusalem. There is not, in either of them, the slightest reference to that great event which stirred the whole Jewish nation and the Roman world with great excitement. It is utterly impossible that a Jew, as Matthew was, or a Roman citizen, as Luke was, could write after that event without once referring to it as a thing of the past. It is supposed by some that Matthew wrote about seven or eight years after the crucifixion. About that we are not sure. But one thing we are sure of, he certainly

wrote before Jerusalem was destroyed. What does that prove? Why, it proves, of course, that any word of Christ which he records about the destruction of that city, must have been prophecy.

I shall presently quote from the words of Josephus. Very few of you, if any, will need to be told who Josephus was. He was a Jew who accompanied the Roman general, Titus. Being a Jew, who never was converted by the Gospel, we may be sure he would not willingly write or say anything to prove the words of Christ. He wrote the history of the destruction of Jerusalem, and as you shall see, if he had set himself to the work of proving the prophecies of Christ, could scarcely have added anything to what he actually wrote, without any such design.

Now, please open your Bibles to the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. You shall read the Scripture verses and I will read from this volume of Josephus, which I hold in

my hand. You shall read the words in which Christ foretold the destruction of the temple and the city, as he looked at them from the Mount of Olives, and I will read the words of a Jew, who tells us how the city appeared to him, less than forty years after, as he looked upon it from the Roman trenches, when Christ's words were being fulfilled.

You may read from the first and second verses of the chapter:

"And Jesus went out and departed from the temple; and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily, I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Josephus says (Wars, Bk. vi., chap. 9):
"Now, the Romans set fire to the extreme parts of the city and burnt them down, and entirely demolished its walls. * * *

(Wars, Bk. vii., chap. 1): "It was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those who dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited."

Matt. xxiv., 4, 5 and 11: Jesus said, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." "And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many."

Josephus says: "The land was overrun with magicians, seducers and imposters, who drew the people after them in multitudes, into solitudes and deserts, to see signs and miracles which they promised to show by the power of God." Of these, one is mentioned by the name of Dositheus, the Samaritan, who claimed to be the Christ; and Simon Magnus, who said he was the Son of God.

In another place (Antiq., Bk. xx, ch. 8): "These deceivers and imposters persuaded

the multitude to follow them into the wilderness and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God. And *many* that were prevailed upon by them suffered the punishment of their folly."

Bear in mind that Josephus was writing of what actually happened just before the siege of Jerusalem, then read what Christ said should happen in Matthew xxiv., 24: "For there shall arise false Christ's and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth. Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not."

Read now Matt. xxiv., 6: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled."

At the time when Christ spoke these words there could be nothing more improbable

than wars in the near future. The Jews were at peace with themselves and all the world. But, in less than forty years, there were wars in different parts of Palestine; cities were laid waste and fields were left uncultivated. This is what the Jewish historian has to say about those times (Wars, Bk. ii., chap. 18): "The disorders, in all Syria, were terrible, and every city was divided into two armies, encamped one against the other, and the preservation of one party was in the destruction of the other; so that daytime was spent in shedding of blood and night in fear; which was of the two more terrible."

Matt. xxiv., 7: "There shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places."

Josephus (Antiq., Bk. iii., chap. 18): "Nay, further, a little before the beginning of this war, when Claudius was Emperor of the Romans, and Ismael was our high priest,

and when so great a famine had come upon us that one-tenth deal of wheat was sold for four drachmæ, etc." Other famines are mentioned by other writers. There were "earthquakes" and "pestilences." Tacitus and Suetonius speak of many as occurring about this time.

And this is what Josephus has to say (Wars, B. iv., ch. 4): "For there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence and very strong winds with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an *earthquake*. These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the whole system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders foreshadowed some great calamities that were coming."

Turn now to Luke xix., 43, which refers to the same great series of events. Jesus

said: "For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side."

Josephus says (Wars, B. v., ch. 13): "When Titus had, therefore, *encompassed* the city with this wall, and put garrisons into proper places, he went round the wall at the first watch of the night and observed how the guard was kept." And that "encompassing" of Jerusalem continued till the doomed city fell into the hands of the Roman soldiers. See how remarkably the words of fulfillment accord with the very words of Christ's prophecy.

Now we will look at Luke xxi., 11, where Christ tells his disciples there should be fearful sights and great signs * * from heaven."

I can read only a few of the many sentences from Josephus (Wars, B. vi., ch. 6) which show how literally these words were

fulfilled. “ Thus there was a star resembling a sword which stood over the city, and a comet which continued a whole year. Thus also before the Jews’ rebellion * * * * [which was the occasion of the coming of the Roman army under Titus] so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house that it appeared to be bright daytime. * * This light was interpreted by the sacred scribes to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. * * Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner court which was of brass and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men * * and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor * * was seen to open of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now those that kept watch of the temple, came hereupon running to the captain of the temple and told him of it * * and not without great difficulty was the gate shut again. * * The men of learning

understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved. * * So these publicly declared that this signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming. * * *

Besides these, a few days after the feast * * a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared. I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those who saw it, and were not the events that followed it of such a nature as to deserve such signals; for before sunseting chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds and surrounding cities. Moreover, at the feast of Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner court of the temple, as their custom was, * * they said that in the first place they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that a voice as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence."

Now I need only ask you to look again at the verse of Scripture upon which these

words are such a comment. What did Christ say should be? "Fearful sights and great signs from heaven." And you will remember it is an unconverted Jew who tells us what "sights and great signs" there were.

So I might lead you through these wonderful chapters, verse by verse, and then show you from the pages of profane history how every word which spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem was literally fulfilled. But I will detain you with only one more reference.

Read now Matt. xxiv., 21: "Then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be."

All historians agree that the sufferings and slaughter at the siege and destruction of Jerusalem were beyond the power of speech to tell. Now listen to the language of Josephus the Jew (Preface to Wars): "It appears to me that the misfortunes of all

men from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were."

Then he tells what some of those horrors were. Whole chapters are given to the fearful picture. Mothers ate their own babes, so great was their hunger. But let us have the very words of the historian (Wars, B. vi., ch. 9): "But when they (the Romans) went in numbers into the lanes of the city, with their swords drawn, they slew those whom they overtook, without mercy, and set fire to the houses whither the Jews had fled, and burnt every soul in them and laid waste a great many of the rest; and when they were come near the houses to plunder them they found in them entire families of dead and the upper rooms full of corpses, that is of such as died by the famine." * * * *

Yet the Romans had no pity for those who were still alive, "but ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the very

lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood." * * *

"Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was 97,000; the number of those that perished during the whole siege was one million one hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation, but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army" (that of Titus).

I close with a word or two. Young people, if you are ever tempted to doubt, turn to those wonderful words of Christ, and remember how exactly and terribly they were fulfilled less than forty years after they were spoken. All which the historian recorded was present to the eye of Christ when he "beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

VIII.

ONE BREAD BASKET FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.

ON the eastern shore of a certain beautiful lake, in a renowned eastern country, a very strange event once took place. In fact a great many strange events of various kinds have taken place around and on that lake, which it would require a volume to tell. Some of those events have been among the greatest in the history of the world. But that of which I am about to tell you was very peculiar indeed. A young Teacher was there whose reputation had spread through all the country. His words were very wonderful and very beautiful. His deeds were as strange and as beautiful as his words. Over on the other side of the lake there was a little city where, in the presence of a large

wedding party, he turned several water-pots full of water into wine. It was noised about that every one who came to him for healing was surely healed, no matter how sick he might be. And, stranger still, it was said that he did all of this doctoring without any sort of medicine. He could drive away a long standing disease by a touch of his gentle hand; cure those who had been deaf by a word, and restore those who were blind without any surgeon's knife or medicine whatever. It was even said, by those who had seen it done, that he could restore the dead to life again. As was natural under such circumstances, a great crowd of people gathered wherever it was known he would be. Of course, many who came were moved only by curiosity. They wanted to see one who could do such wonders, just as a great many would go from the same motive to-day if there were some one near here who could do such things. Many who went to see and

hear him were his enemies from the first; for they were also teachers of the people; and what he taught so clearly and beautifully contradicted what they taught. Others were his enemies because what he said pointed out that their lives were sinful, and that they must change their conduct and repent of their sins. Of course, these enemies of his would be on the lookout to find anything which could possibly be used to prove that he was only a pretender. You may be very sure that they looked very carefully into every case. They sent committees to watch Him and annoy Him when He was talking. I suppose if all the facts were known we should see that they sent committees to examine every great cure that he performed, until they found it was no sort of use. There are one or two places where we can see how these committees tried to find a flaw in his work, and how they tried to torment one who was cured of blindness, when they

found it was no use to deny the great fact (John, chap. ix). Now, it is a very interesting fact that they never found a single case which they could dispute. They didn't deny that the water had been turned into wine; they didn't deny that the blind had been restored; they didn't deny that lepers had been cleansed by a word from his lips; they didn't deny even that the dead had been raised up.

Well it is no wonder that the people came to see and to hear him. And on this occasion, it seems there were fully five thousand men, besides women and children, who had flocked together from cities and villages and country places, into an out of the way place to hear him. They had neglected to provide for their wants—perhaps having not thought of staying so long. But the words of the young Teacher had charmed them, and there they were, at supper time, without any supper. What should they do? Some

of them proposed to send the people away. But the Teacher said, No; that will not do. They need not depart; "give ye them to eat." But how could they do it? They had only five loaves of bread and two fishes. But he said to them, You have the people sit on the grass; arrange them in rows so that you can go conveniently among them. Then he took those five loaves and two fishes and looked up to heaven, and blessed them. Then he called his friends and began to break and give them out. And he gave one all he could carry, and another, and another, and they went among the people, giving out. And all of that great company of more than five thousand, ate all that they wanted. And when they were all satisfied, there were twelve baskets full of pieces left.

Now, how do you suppose those people must have felt as they saw that Teacher standing there and breaking off the bread—getting enough to make thousands of loaves

from those five loaves and as much as to make thousands of fishes from those two fishes? They knew, as you and I would know, if we saw such a thing done, that the person who did it was either divine or had divine help. They knew that it was a great miracle. Not one of them could deny it. There is no evidence that one of them ever did deny it.

Now, you will bear in mind what I said in a previous talk. The Gospel of Matthew, telling all about this miracle, was published and read all through that country, while a great many of those thousands of people must have been still living. Surely, if that miracle had not been true, some of them would have been interested to write to the priests who had put Christ to death at Jerusalem, and would have told them: "Why, I was there when it is claimed that miracle was done—that feeding of five thousand men, besides women and children—and it is all a deception. It isn't true." And, if anyone had written any such thing you

may be sure the priests would have published it all over the world, for the religion of Christ was spreading everywhere, and they hated it. They couldn't bear to see it succeed. They put the apostles in prison and killed one of them. But they never denied one of the miracles of Christ.

Why didn't some one write from Galilee to Jerusalem, denying that miracle? Why, evidently because they knew, and everybody knew, that there were thousands who could testify that it was true and that they had seen it with their own eyes. They had means of sending word to Rome and Corinth, where churches were being organized.

A great many fragments of books and papers have come down to us from those times, but not a line denying the miracles of Christ Jesus. We know, therefore, that such books were not written, for some line would have been saved if they had. Now, why didn't they write to different places and deny the wonderful miracles of Christ? Why didn't they say, "The widow of Nain's son

was not raised from the dead?" I'll tell you why: Because he probably lived right there in Palestine as long as most of them—a living witness, ready to say to all who asked him, "Yes, I was dead and am alive again!"

So with Lazarus. We know that he lived some time after he was raised by Christ, and many went out from Jerusalem to see him and to eat with him at the same table. If you will turn to John xii., 1-11, you will find the record which shows how the resurrection of Lazarus affected both the friends and the foes of Christ. One went to meet him socially, the other wanted to put him to death again and so get him out of the way, because his presence was a testimony which no denial of theirs could touch.

Probably there were nearly or quite a hundred thousand persons living, when the first of the gospels was published, who had either witnessed some of Christ's miracles with their own eyes, or had seen persons

upon whom the miracles were performed. So you see why no denial of these miracles was attempted. It would be no sort of use for Christ's enemies to deny them under such circumstances, for thousands would rise up and say: "There is no use of denying that miracle, for I was there and saw it done."

You will hear of other miracles, performed by saints and wonder-workers. But they are impostures. You will notice they are always done in the dark, or away from the gaze of men. Christ's miracles were done in the open day, when hundreds and even thousands could see. So were the miracles of the apostles, to whom he gave power to work them.

If Christ had ever so much as *once* failed in trying to work a miracle, that would arouse our suspicion. But he never failed. About forty distinct miracles are recorded, with the particulars, besides a number of cases where it is recorded that they came

from all the region around, bringing a great multitude of those who were sick, and he healed them all. (Mark i., 32.) The cures were not gradual, as when medicines are used, but instantaneous.

In the presence of such abundant facts, who can doubt the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ? You and I know very well that no man could do these things unless God helped him. But God would not help him to deceive the people; and Christ said, over and over again, that He was the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world.

As I have shown you, the facts are above dispute. They were never disputed by those who were nearest to Christ. How foolish must one be who, therefore, denies the divinity of Christ. He is compelled to believe that an unaided man could open blind eyes and raise the dead to life. It is better, dear friends, for us all to bow down at His feet, and cry out, as Thomas did when the proof was before him, "My Lord and my God."

IX.

WHAT HAS IT DONE FOR THE WORLD?

THERE is one test which all practical people apply to everything which seeks their approval: "How does it work?" You may prove the theory, they don't care so much about that. They prefer to know the results. The inventor of a new mowing machine may explain all about its cogs, draft and cutting bar; but the business-like farmer simply says to him, "That's all very well. Your story is pleasing and your machine is beautiful; but here is a field of grass. Drive in with your mower, and let us see the swath it cuts." Now, unless the swath is satisfactory, the fine story and the beautiful machine won't amount to much. The farmer will tell him to drive on.

Just so the world asks, what results have you to show for your Christianity? Its doctrines and morals are beautiful; the proof that it has come from God is perfect, as an

argument; but what effect does it produce on the lives of those who receive it? Does it make them better or worse? Does it produce charity instead of envy, love instead of hatred, and kindness instead of cruelty or contrariwise?

These questions need only to be asked. The whole world knows the answer. But you may never have considered how strong and full the answer becomes as we look into the great changes which Christianity has made in the world. We may be very sure at the outset that no argument would amount to much in its favor, if it were found to be true that our religion had been a curse to the world. Suppose that, as the apostles and other early preachers of the gospel went from city to city establishing churches, it had been found, that those who before had been honest became thieves, and that persons who before had been pure became immoral. Suppose it had been found that those who had been industrious became idlers as soon as they became Christians, and that some who before had been sober forthwith became drunkards. Suppose, in short,

that degradation and sin had increased in every place where these preachers planted churches. How much would any argument for the inspiration of such a religion amount to? You know and I know that people would have said long ago, "Your Christian theory is all right; but the results don't match. We want to see fruits which correspond."

The argument from results is stronger than any other; so also it is the one to which Christian people turn with greatest delight. They appeal with joy to the great things which the religion of Christ has done for the world. When Christ came the world seemed to be given over to a reign of cruelty and lust. Among the Jews the forms of religion were observed, but without heart or sincerity. Elsewhere throughout the Roman empire paganism was supreme. The people had hundreds of gods,—gods for their lusts as well as gods for their virtues. They had altars and temples consecrated to gods of drunkenness and goddesses of lust. The state of morals among the people was just what might be expected under such circum-

stances. The distinctions between purity and impurity seemed to be blotted out. The people became like the false gods of lust which they worshipped. An early Church historian is compelled to use language, in describing their daily vices, such as it would be improper for me to repeat to you. Some of the greatest orators and philosophers of Rome were guilty of such crimes against morality, and even against nature, as would shut them out of all decent society to-day. Plutarch says that most of the ancient philosophers practiced a horrible and unnamable vice. Any person who has read even a little of Roman history knows what lives of debauchery the emperors led. Such being the example set by those who were high in position, what must have been the state of morals at large?

It was an age filled with heartless cruelties. The very pleasures of the people were butcheries. Gladiatorial shows were as common then as base-ball matches are now. Vast theatres were built which would accommodate thousands; one of them had seats for 385,000 people. The ruins of some of

them are still standing—monuments of the heartlessness of the age which built them. Wars of conquest were waged almost constantly, and the poor captives were brought in droves to the principal cities. Drovers of them were sold into slavery. Other droves of them were put in training as gladiators. Then, on great occasions, the people used to rush *en masse*, men, women and children, to see these poor gladiators hew each other to pieces, as they were compelled to do. Sometimes that sort of sport would be kept up for days together. One is compelled to ask, again and again, as he reads their history, what the hearts of the people could have been made of, that they could enjoy and even demand such pleasures.

But people who have such hearts won't stop with compelling their prisoners to slaughter each other. People who delight in murder will take a hand in it themselves. So we find they did. Whenever they tired of one of their emperors they killed him. Very few of their rulers, from the unhappy Julius onward for centuries, died a natural death. When an unnatural mother did not

want the trouble of raising her child, she murdered it, and such was the state of public opinion, both at Athens and at Rome, that she need not so much as hide her crime against God.

The murder of new-born infants was no crime against the laws of man, and was frightfully common. Their prominent authors do not condemn, they even commend the practice. Slavery of the most horrible kind was everywhere common. Any prisoner of war might be sold into slavery. Men of great ability and culture, and women of the highest refinement, were driven away to die in slavery. When any slave had grown old and helpless, his master might kill him outright or turn him off, like a worn-out canal horse, to die. A father might sell his own children into slavery or kill them as he chose. The Roman Empire was drenched with blood—blood of war, blood of suicide, blood of fratricide, blood of infanticide, blood of every kind of murder.

Among such people charity in the true sense was impossible. Of course they built no asylums for the insane, for orphans, or for

the infirm. They had a shorter and more radical way of disposing of their supernumerary orphans, lunatics and paupers. When they were too much in the way they killed them. I cannot, according to my plan, burden these short talks with references and proofs. If any of you are interested to pursue the subject further you will find abundant facts in such books as Uhlhorn's *Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism*. In briefer and more condensed form you will find many more facts than I have given you, in the tenth chapter of McIlvaine's *Evidences of Christianity*.

This picture of the heathen world, of which I have given you only an outline, is, I assure you, underdrawn rather than overdrawn. It represents what human philosophy, without divine grace, could do for the world.

It was into such a state of things that Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, was sent to carry the Gospel. That state of things was common in all of the countries of the Roman empire. That meant all of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean sea, or nearly the whole civilized world.

What effect did Christianity have on these people? Did they become worse or better? Were there more murders committed, or did the murders grow less? Did people become more impure, if that had been possible, or did they, as they received the Gospel, forsake their impurities? Did mothers learn to love their infants less and cast them away in greater numbers, or did they at once begin to cherish them and look with horror on their own past cruelties?

We have the best opportunities to know, for Christianity spread very rapidly. During the first century it founded churches and multiplied its converts in most of the chief cities of the empire, and even under the shadow of Cæsar's palace. You and I know that these early Christians were taught to forsake their idols as they would forsake the worship of devils; that they were taught to be kind to each other, to bear each other's burdens, to provide for the poor and the weak; that they were taught that they must at once abandon all of the impure practices which their idolatry had permitted; that they must be honest, pure, truthful—hus-

bands loving their wives and wives honoring their husbands; parents must be gentle towards their children, not provoking them to wrath, and that all must render obedience to the government as loyal citizens, whenever the demands of the government were not contrary to the laws of God.

Scattered through the Acts of the Apostles, and through the various epistles of the New Testament, we catch glimpses of the struggle which these people underwent in throwing off their idolatry, their former impurities and cruelties, and stepping up into the purity of the Gospel. Living at a time when the masses practiced vices which are to-day esteemed heinous, and all their life-time, before, accustomed to think lightly of such things, it is little wonder that some of them made serious mistakes. But the thing of interest to us is that they were compelled to give these practices up. Their religious teachers do not ease their consciences, but rebuke them sharply, and exhort the Churches to turn them out unless they repent and thoroughly reform. Such cases were exceptional, though they may have

been frequent. Faithfully recorded, they are a proof that the record is genuine. From the nature of the case we know that such instances must have occurred; but no imposter would ever have told of them. They who joined these young churches were compelled at once to live a new life—to breathe a new atmosphere.

We have a most interesting testimony by a high pagan authority concerning the sort of life those early Christians lived. It was written by the Roman governor of Bithynia about the year 107 A. D. He found the Christians increasing in his province so rapidly that the altars of the heathen gods were in danger of being deserted. Yet, as he could not find the least fault with the character of these Christians, he was in doubt how to deal with them. So he writes a letter to his emperor, Trajan, describing the character of the Christians, and asking what he should do. In his letter, he says: "The guilt of these Christians they confess to be this: that they are accustomed to meet on a stated day, before light, and to sing in concert a hymn to Christ as God; they bind

themselves by an oath, not for the perpetration of any wickedness, but that they will not commit any theft, robbery or adultery, nor violate their word, nor refuse to restore anything committed to their trust."

And this is the testimony of a pagan ruler: The only "guilt" he could find in them was that they would meet and worship Christ. The "oath" which he refers to was doubtless the Christian covenant into which they entered. A Roman governor, anxious to find some charge on which to convict them, can not find that they violate their covenant in any particular. They do not steal; they are not unclean, nor do they break their word. How strangely pure and holy must such a society have seemed in the midst of the heathen impurities of that age!

This little glimpse of Christian character which we get through the eye of a heathen, represents, we know, the true state of the thousands of Christians who were everywhere multiplying in the Roman empire.

About the opening of the fourth century (312 A. D.) they had become very numerous, and were numbered perhaps by the mil-

lion. Many of them, like other Roman citizens, were compelled to serve in the armies of the empire. Constantine, who was one of the prominent Roman leaders, and who soon after became emperor, had a great many of these Christians in his army. While himself still a pagan, he could not help observing and remarking upon the great difference between these Christian soldiers and the rest of his army. While the others were turbulent, boisterous and disorderly, they were peaceful, orderly and faithful in their conduct. Many have supposed that the example of these orderly Christian soldiers led their general to respect their belief, and influenced him to become a Christian himself, quite as much as the famous vision in which he saw the cross. However that may be, Constantine's testimony to the character of the Christians of that day remains. When men became Christians they became orderly and abandoned their immoralities.

By this time the Christian element of the empire had become so numerous that it began to have its influence in the shaping of

laws, as it had long been a power in silently molding sentiment. Gradually the evils which had prevailed under pagan laws were reformed. Slaves began to have some rights which masters were bound to respect. The laws began to recognize and protect little children; Christian women excited respect by the modesty of their dress and the purity of their demeanor. "What women there are among these Christians!" exclaimed the astonished pagan Libanius, as he beheld their purity and their fearlessness, even in the presence of death. Gladiatorial shows, in time, were abolished by law. Charities of one form and another grew up into public notice, so that instead of slaughtering the helpless and infirm, they began to be tenderly cared for in asylums, as we see to-day. The little children who had been abandoned by their heartless heathen parents, were gathered up and cared for by kind-hearted Christians, who had learned their spirit of love from Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

So the orphan asylums of the world were started. The spirit of charity and benevolence breathed forth from these Christian bosoms and affected the world at large. Cyprian (bishop of Carthage 248 A. D.) easily collected, in his church, five thousand dollars, in order to help the Numidian bishop in ransoming prisoners. In the time of the persecutions of the Emperor Decius, the church at Rome, alone, supported fifteen hundred poor persons, widows and children. The same spirit of love and benevolence prevailed throughout the world among Christians. Many other examples might be given. Prisoners were ransomed with the money freely contributed by Christians. The liberty of slaves was purchased. Orphans were tenderly cared for. In times of pestilence, when the heathen abandoned even their own relatives to die, Christian churches were turned into hospitals and church members went everywhere among the suffering. The heathen looked on in astonishment. The world had seen nothing like it before. A new principle had been introduced, which taught people to love and do for others, even

at the sacrifice of property and life. Among the heathen, the poor, the weak and the oppressed had been only despised. Christians remembered and acted on the teaching of their Master: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

And the thing to which I call your attention, especially young people, is this: These great reformatations were brought about distinctly by Christianity. They were not the result of some gradual development, working at the same time in the church and out of it. These new ideas of tenderness and gentleness toward humanity, did not come at the same time to some Christians and to some pagans. They sprang up into full life and bloom among Christians, while the pagan world was still continuing its practices of cruelty and legalized murder. The pagan world, separated by a distinct line from all these Christian practices, first sneered, then wondered, then admired, and presently began to yield to the reign of love.

These things are true, on the testimony of pagan rulers like Pliny and Constantine before his conversion, and on the testimony

of historians like Gibbon and Hume. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit; wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

In what civilized nation to-day would people tolerate the murder of infants or the bloody sights of a gladiatorial arena? In what civilized nation would unclean women be honored as priestesses at religious altars? What civilized people would to-day honor any man as a philosopher who would advocate these atrocities? The more you study the world's history, the more you will be impressed that wonderful progress has been made in the world's morals. You will be impressed, too, with the fact that these great changes have been brought about by Christianity. These great changes have been made only in those countries where the religion of Christ has been received. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

NOTE.—The fearful exposures of London vices, recently made, are no contradiction. The exposure of those vices excites universal horror and condemnation. But in the pagan world such deeds did not even excite remark, and would not have been esteemed criminal. To-day there is virtue to correct them; then there was not virtue sufficient to have condemned them.

X.

FROM A NAKED SAVAGE TO A CULTURED PRINCE.

IN our last talk we looked at the fruits which the teachings of Jesus early began to bear throughout the Roman empire. We found that persons, who before had been unclean and cruel, dropped those evil ways as soon as they became Christians. We heard the testimony of two Roman pagans in high authority, one a governor of a province, and the other a great general who afterwards became emperor. We saw how, as the number of these pure-lived Christians increased, they began, by gentle influences, to effect great changes in national customs and laws.

This evening I will ask you to look at the fruits which Christianity is still bearing in the world, wherever its gentle touch is felt. But first I want to answer an objection which you frequently see in newspaper articles,

copied from infidel lectures. It is said that the Christian Church has, sometimes, itself been a persecuting power; that wicked men have done deeds of violence in the name of the Church; that the Church, at one time, opposed the advance of science.

The trouble has arisen because people have refused to see that there is a difference between Christianity and the Church. When the organized Christian Church numbered only twelve members, and the Lord himself was its Pastor, there was one Judas in it. Christianity (or the teachings of Christ) even at that early day, was one thing; the Church was another. Christianity was perfect; the Church was imperfect. Judas tried to overthrow Christianity. He betrayed its Teacher and Founder. Now, no honest person, with a grain of sense, would hold Christianity responsible for the treachery of a person who did his best to destroy it. It would be just as sensible to hold our laws responsible for the deeds of a murderer. The law condemns murder, and is not responsible though many break it. Christianity condemns sin, and is not responsible for the

deeds of any Judas, or any number of Judases who creep into its camp.

It is true that, after a few centuries, when Christianity had won many thousands of converts, and when the emperor on the throne professed conversion, then multitudes who were unworthy flocked into the Christian churches. There are always plenty of unworthy persons who will join any organization which is popular. Popularity is a power, and persons there are, who are willing to be hypocrites, if so they can increase their power. Men of bad hearts and unholy lives did become church members; many such, by scheming, did become high officers of the Church. When in office they did things over which not only Christianity, but common morality wept. But Christianity was no more responsible for these deeds than it was responsible for the crimes of Judas. The principle is the same, whether there is one Judas or a thousand.

During all the long period which many, high in authority, were doing such wickedness in the name of the Church, however, there were thousands and hundreds of thousands

in whose hearts and lives the religion of Christ was constantly bearing its fruits of gentleness, purity and peace. It was not Christianity, but those who had usurped the powers of the Church, and who used them for personal ends, who were responsible for the crimes done in the name of religion. Nor were the great masses of the church members in sympathy with their crimes. For the most part they were ignorant of them. When they knew they lamented them; but they were powerless to change them. When Luther arose, the way in which he was supported by the masses, proved that their hearts were not in sympathy with the corruptions of Rome. The sympathy which, throughout Europe, rallied to support the protest of the reformers, shows what fruit the genuine spirit of Christianity had been preparing in the hearts of the people. I cannot lead you further into this thought. I can only hope, young people, that you will pursue it in your private reading and reflection, and that you will remember it when you hear anyone assailing Christianity for the corruptions of the med-

iaeval Church. Christianity has never been corrupt, nor has it been corrupting; but, in spite of it, some corruptions have crept into the Church from the very beginning. But all of the hypocrisies of men have never been able to prevent the light which is in the teachings of Jesus from shining.

It would be very interesting, if there were time, to trace the conquests of Christianity; to show what changes it made throughout Europe; how it transformed the barbarians of Germany and lifted up the rude tribes of Britain. But this is what our religion has been doing from the beginning, and I want you, therefore, to look at some facts in the same line which will, perhaps, be the more impressive, because they are very recent or now in progress. You know it is sometimes said that all of these results would have happened just the same without any Christ or His teachings. But, it is either ignorance or falsehood which prompts such a statement.

There are those still living who remember what the Sandwich Islands were at the opening of this century. Terrible reports

of the cruelty and degradation of the Islanders used to be brought to America by the navigators who touched there. From one cause and another the American Board determined to send missionaries there. In 1820 seven missionaries and their wives landed on one of the Islands. They found the people naked, cruel, and utterly immoral and untruthful; savages, who would kill each other for human sacrifice. There were no civilizing influences, no books of philosophy or poetry, and no knowledge of science among them to work any change in their customs or character. The missionaries and their Bibles had the field to themselves. They alone stood on the side of morality and civilization.

Well, what were the results? We are enquiring after the fruits. What could Christianity do for such a people? The results were little short of a miracle. For a few years, while the missionaries were learning the language, progress was, of course, slow. Then the Pentacostal fires broke forth. The people flocked in tens of thousands to hear the truth and were converted in thousands.

They clothed themselves decently. In a short time they began to build churches and schools. Their language was reduced to writing. They had the Bible and books of science in their own tongue. All of the appliances of civilization followed, until, to-day, they are an orderly, civilized people, having regularly established laws, beautiful homes, schools of higher learning and churches.

A little incident was told by Rev. Dr. Gulick, who had been a missionary among the Micronesian Islands. He was visiting at the Sandwich Islands a few years ago and during a talk which he gave to the people, he displayed some little idols of the people among whom he had been laboring. Instantly his audience broke into a laugh. So thoroughly had these people been redeemed, whose fathers and mothers only a few years before had been naked, idol-worshipping pagans, that such idols appeared utterly ridiculous to them.

If you want a story more wonderful than any Arabian Nights' tale, read the full account of those wonderful days when a

little handful of missionaries were leading these naked heathen out of darkness into the light.

The first King of the Islands whom the missionaries saw, came more than once from the surf to Mr. Ruggles' house, with his five wives, all in a state of nature, so far as any clothing was concerned. Mr. Ruggles finally told the king of his impropriety; next time he came dressed. He had on a pair of silk stockings and a hat! He and his people had no more shame or modesty than so many brutes. That was no further back than 1820.

A few years ago the king of these Islands, one of the successors of that naked savage, journeyed through this country and was everywhere received with honor, not only as a monarch, but as a refined and courteous gentleman.

Such are the results of the Gospel, my young friends. "By its fruits ye shall know it."

But other changes, quite as great and wonderful in proportion, are taking place in other though smaller islands of the Pacific

ocean. Where only a few years ago sailors did not dare to land for fear of being eaten; where the inhabitants were warlike, naked savages, to-day there are churches, schools and good order. The people are clothed and live obedient to law. There are those still living who have dined on human roasts, who are to-day, according to abundant testimony, exemplary Christians, and so, of course, good citizens.

Not long ago a ship was wrecked on one of these islands, whose inhabitants had once been savages and cannibals. The survivors crawled about from hiding place to hiding place in great terror until they saw, from an eminence, a friendly church spire. Then they laughed at their fears. Church spires mean something even to godless sailors. What has brought about this great change in many of the Micronesian Islands? A few faithful missionaries with their Bibles. And it is an interesting fact that the first missionaries to these people were sent out by the Sandwich Islands only thirty years after they themselves first heard of Christ. That is the spirit of the Gospel: such are its

results. In many of the Gilbert Islands or Caroline Islands to-night your life and property would be as safe as in our own city. What is the reason? Oh, there are church spires there. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Now let me ask you a question: What other book could the missionaries have carried with them, leaving their Bible behind, and produced the same result? Suppose they had left their Bibles in Honolulu or Boston, and had taken along instead Voltaire and Paine? Suppose they could have taken Mr. Ingersoll's lectures, filled with brilliant blasphemy, and could have added a volume of Herbert Spencer's philosophy, and another from Huxley on *Protoplasm*? Suppose they had taught the contents of these books to those naked savages? Do you think that the teachings of these books would have led them to a change of heart and life? Would they have learned to restrain their passions from Mr. Ingersoll, who teaches that God is cruel and that human parents are cruel if they restrain their children? Would they have learned

reverence from Mr. Spencer, who teaches that there probably is no God; or if there is, that He is forever unknowable? Would they have learned self-respect and decency from Mr. Huxley, who would teach them that they are lineal descendants of monkeys?

You know, young people, that there is nothing in this kind of literature to change the heart for the better, to produce such reformatations as we see among these Islanders. Has anyone ever left the Bible behind and gone among savages with the best literature of human genius—like the poems of Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott, or the philosophy of Bacon and the astronomy of Herschel or Kepler—and with such, even noble literature, produced a reformation from naked barbarism to modern civilization? Never! It could not be done. May be some will say, "It never has been tried?" That is true, and it never will be tried, for two reasons: No one is foolish enough to think it could succeed; and everyone who cares enough for the heathen to go among them and attempt their reformation is a lover of the Bible. No book or books in

the world have ever taught people to go forth to redeem savages but the Bible.

The Bible does teach its believers to love even naked savages; it does teach them to attempt their redemption; it does promise them success; and strange as it may seem, the success follows wherever Bible truths are taught.

I have given you only samples of the great work which is going on the wide world around. In these days missionaries are like the British empire—the sun never sets on them. They are on all continents and on nearly all islands; and wherever they are faithfully teaching Christ, there you will find those who have been unclean becoming pure; those who have been thieves becoming honest; those who have been murderers becoming gentle and even noble.

Such are the changes of heart and character which go everywhere with the Bible and Christianity. There will be time enough for us to throw away our Bibles and accept infidel lectures when it can be shown that the savages of one little island have been changed into civilized beings by reading those lec-

tures; or even when it can be shown that they have changed one thief or adulterer or murderer into a good citizen. If human genius, whether in the form of poetry, art, science or philosophy, or all combined, has never been able to produce such reformatations, then it is safe to say that it is because it cannot. It must be, therefore, that some higher Power than that of human genius is in the teachings which do produce these changes. That higher Power does always go with the Bible, for where the Bible goes these changes are wrought. Or if it shall be said that the Bible itself is only a product of human thought, then I ask why has human thought never produced but one? Why does not some one immortalize himself by writing another book which shall have power to change savage hordes into civilized nations in the space of a single generation? Here is a chance for immortality, even for those who deny Bible immortality. Let them write a book which shall produce results like those of the Bible, and millions will make them immortal by affection and grateful memory.

XI.

WHERE DID SUCH LIFE AND CHARACTER COME FROM?

THERE is one fact, young people, which is an everlasting miracle. That is the spotless and perfect character of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is to-day and will be forever in the world as an ideal. A miracle is something supernatural—something beyond the reach of man's power. You and I cannot walk on the sea nor still its tempests with a word; we cannot change water into wine, nor can we multiply five loaves into five thousand. These things are as much beyond our reach as the stars. But they are no more impossible than it is for us to live such a life as Jesus Christ lived. We can look to Him as our example, but we can never hope to equal the moral beauty, the strength and the unerring wisdom of His character. Even those who teach the possibility of human perfection, do not for a mo-

ment claim any such thing. They teach that God holds us to account only according to our light or understanding. If we live up to our views of duty, though they may be very imperfect, yet, in God's sight, that constitutes a blameless life.

But the life at which we are now looking does not ask for any such allowance. The perfection of which I am now speaking is no such modified affair. The claim is that for more than eighteen hundred years the world has had before it the example of a character which was perfect in its strength and wisdom, as well as in its intentions. There has been one such life and only one. Such a life as that must forever be, in the highest sense, a miracle. They who deny the miracles of restoration and resurrection, must still account for this supreme miracle of character and life.

No one claims that there has ever been any other absolutely perfect life on earth. Millions, as you know very well, do claim that there has been one perfect life among men. If there has been only one, and if all men at once acknowledge the impossibility

of ever reaching such a standard again, then we must conclude that He who could live so far above us while living among us, is divine.

It is certainly worth our thought to consider some of the few ways in which the character of Christ is different from that of all men.

You all know, when you reflect upon it a moment, how impossible it is for people to live in one age in such a way that those who follow them cannot find fault with some things which they did, which they considered perfectly right at the time. We reverence our Puritan ancestors, and they certainly deserve all of the reverence we give them. But they did some things which they thought were right, which we would consider very wrong. In other words, the moral standards of people change from age to age, and some things which seemed right once do not appear so under greater light.

Now we look back at the character of Christ through all of the changes of more than eighteen centuries. We can see that those about Him were sinners. But there is absolutely nothing in His life which the

clearer light of any century since then can find fault with.

Of other great men we are compelled to say, "They lived fairly according to the light they had." Of their faults we say, "Oh, no one then considered such a thing to be wrong."

But we are in no case called upon to make any such allowance for Christ. Somehow, He succeeded in so living that His life had nothing which any age would discover to be a fault. The remarkable thing is that He, of all the good and great, is the only One who ever did live so. He lived for all ages and for all mankind.

Another very strange thing about His life is the fact that no passing of centuries, or change of place, makes any difference with the beauty of His words. No other person ever lived, who talked as much as Christ, who did not say some things which lost their beauty and their force as soon as the age in which he lived had gone by. This has been true of the men of greatest genius. John Milton is only two centuries back of our own time. Yet he wrote and uttered some things

which lost their application with the generation in which he lived. Nobody cares for them now. So nearly all writers and teachers betray their prejudices in favor of one nation or another, of one class or another. If they are Frenchmen, they can hardly avoid saying some things which will be offensive to the Germans; if they are English, they are sure to show it somewhere, in a way which will shut out the sympathy of Russians. Or, again, it is a rare thing to find one who can speak in such a way as to win the sympathies of both rich and poor, of both learned and ignorant, of both the aged and children.

But the words of Christ lose none of their beauty as the centuries go by. There is nothing in them which depends for its interest on time or place. They were listened to by thousands with delight when he spoke them: they are read by millions with delight at the present day. They are equally loved by men of the most different tastes and of the most various nationalities. They are studied with equal delight in the palaces of the rich and the cottages of the poor. Men

whose lives have been given to study delight in their wisdom, and little children, who know nothing of study, are delighted with their beauty. There is sympathy in them for all proper joys; there is consolation for every hour of woe. The words of Christ, alone, speak to all ages and all conditions of men, in such a way as to be equally forcible in every age and to every condition.

The wisest of human beings are, sometimes, in perplexity and doubt. We have recently had a conspicuous example. Mr. Gladstone is acknowledged to be one of the wisest of living men, yet his warmest admirer must admit that he has recently been in great perplexity, not knowing, with all of his wisdom, which way to turn. Or we may come to more personal matters. What person ever lived without sometimes doubting which way to go, or what, under the circumstances, it was best for him to do? There is no one of our acquaintance, there is none whose life has been written, who does not somewhere, if not frequently, show that he is perplexed.

Christ was different from all men, in that He never was in doubt. Four different authors have given us the history of his life. In those histories we see him surrounded, now by friends and now by foes; sometimes in great popularity and sometimes in great danger; frequently compelled to answer without a moment's preparation, where a wrong word would have been fatal to His mission, and as often compelled to act where a wrong move would have been prematurely fatal to His life; all this time carrying a sense of such responsibility as never rested on the head of any prime minister of an empire. In all of these trying circumstances there is not the slightest indication that He ever, for one moment, doubted what it was best to say or do. And what is still more strange, though his life has been searched for eighteen centuries with the lighted candles of hatred, as well as with the bright light of friendship, no one has ever been able to find that He once spoke the wrong word or did an unwise thing.

The best of men are sometimes weak. Good intentions, even when well carried out,

do not keep any from sometimes doing things which he had better left undone. We grow wiser with years. We correct our former judgments and regret many of our past failures.

The most searching criticism cannot discover that Jesus had any failures to correct. There were no indiscretions to lament, nor any weak judgments to be amended. If there had been, some of them would surely have found their way into the histories of His life. Even if we should suppose that Christ's friends tried to keep His faults out of their records, no imperfect man would have such perfect wisdom as to be able to judge infallibly what things would always, in all ages, be esteemed as virtues and what would be criticised as faults. So we may be sure, young people, if Christ had been in any respect weak like others, it would somewhere appear in the gospels. Christ was not only without blame; He was also without weakness. To my mind it is one of the strongest proofs of His divinity that all men have such views of His character that even one weakness would be a sin, and forever fatal to its beauty.

There is still a stronger evidence that Christ was pure and without even a weakness. In all human friends intimacy discovers some things which require charity and forbearance. We find on closer acquaintance that our friend's beautiful temper is marred by fretfulness; or his purpose has its times of wavering; or he, who seemed always before to be so magnanimous, is found to be suspicious and jealous at times.

But intimacy never discovered any such failing in Christ. Twelve men were with Him day and night. They saw Him when a weak nature would have been puffed up, for the people were ready to proclaim Him king. They saw Him when a single weakness would have betrayed itself in dejection, for the throng had deserted Him and all men were ready to spit on Him and kill Him. Did they find any weakness or wrong? Did those quick and questioning eyes see, even once, any hasty flashing of resentment or any weak display of wounded vanity? Was He ever in despair over broken hopes and faded ambitions? Never. The unbroken influence of His life for more than two years

led those disciples step by step away from the opinion that He was only a carpenter from Nazareth, only the son of Mary—up to the confession which burst from the lips of Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It would have been possible for them to think Him a good man if He had sometimes made mistakes; but it would not have been possible for them to think Him “the Son of the living God” if they had ever detected Him in even one mistake. Those disciples, all but the traitor, proved the sincerity of their opinion by worshipping Him; by preaching His life, death, and resurrection; by suffering, and most of them by dying, for His sake.

The best of men have times when they show that they are aware that they are sinners. There have been not only mistakes, of which they are ashamed, but positive sins, for which they are heart-broken and sorry. The nearer they get to God, and the more their lives correspond with His law, the more clearly do they see and the more deeply do they repent of their past sins. Aside from the life of Christ, there is scarcely in

history so grand a character as that of the Hebrew prophet, Isaiah. Yet if you will open your Bibles to his sixth chapter, fifth verse, you will see how a view of his sins affected him. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." That is how sinful men feel when they see themselves in the light of God's perfect holiness. Job, whose character has the special commendation of the Almighty, was affected in the same way. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job xlii., 5, 6.)

The uniform testimony of all who have ever come into peace with God is, that these words are none too strong. You have seen and heard it again and again during the past few months. You have seen those whose outward lives have been correct and beautiful bowing in contrition and tears, saying: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Some have felt especially their great guilt in having so long rejected the love of God.

But while seers and patriarchs, preachers and priests bow down in the dust and ashes of penitence, this strange and wonderful Christ never utters a word of repentance; His brow is never once clouded with sorrow on account of any sin of His own. He rebukes others for their sins, and they shrink back from the penetrating gaze of His purity. But no one ever thinks of saying to Him, "Why do you not repent of your own sins?" Some such thing would surely have happened if they had discovered any sin in Him. But he boldly asks them, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" The only conclusion that we can reach is that He was without sin. In that respect, also, He was unlike all others who have ever lived.

I can only refer to one or two other respects, although there are many, in which the character of Christ is utterly in contrast with the purest of human lives. If any of you are interested to pursue the subject more fully, you will find the tenth chapter of Bushnell's *Nature and the Supernatural* most interesting and instructive, to which I am indebted for some suggestions in this talk.

How did Christ manage to say such remarkable things of Himself without at once disgusting all who heard Him. "I am the light of the world." "Before Abraham was I am." "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "My words shall never pass away." "I and my Father are one." "Then shall the Son of Man sit on the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations."

Without the least hesitancy He speaks of Himself as equal with God, as the author of the final resurrection, and as the Judge who shall sit at the final tribunal. Others have sometimes made equal pretensions, but they have at once been dealt with as insane. Such they have been, unless they have been exposed as the most arrant imposters. But the strange thing is that Christ's character was such that He could say such things and not disgust people. Thousands gathered about Him. Some one may say, "Yes, but the mob crucified Him at last." True, but there were doubtless many whose love and reverence He had who were powerless to

help Him. But that does not affect the judgments of to-day, though all deserted Him. The millions who love Him throughout the world know that He was crucified. They know, too, how He said of Himself, "I am the light of the world;" "I and my Father are one." People who detest every pretence know all this and are not repelled. They bow with love and adoration. How can this be? It is because the perfect character of Christ supports His claim. It is not boasting for Him to say, "I am the light of the world," because that is the fact. How soon would any man who should utter such words stand exposed as a pretender! Let the best and the noblest try it. Their goodness and greatness are well enough, as long as they pretend only to be human. But let them claim to be divine, and see how soon thousands would prove them sinners. Their goodness would be as the morning dew. But not only could Christ say such things without disgusting people; He could so utter them as not to be boastful; but He did more; He so uttered such truths as to leave the sweetest impress of holy simplicity and humility that the world has ever had.

Human ambition is satisfied with the brief span of this life and human benevolence rarely looks more than a generation beyond it. But Christ planned a kingdom which should be world-wide in extent; which should last to the end of time; which should require the fidelity and even suffering of millions for its success; which could only be inaugurated by His own death, and which could triumph only in the distant ages, after He should have gone back to His home of light. Is it human or divine to plan in that way? What prince ever dreamed of such dominion but the Prince of Peace? What king ever dreamed of such a scepter but the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords? You will remember there is one touching little passage which tells how the woman breaks the alabaster box, and how Christ says of that act, "She did it for my burial." He expected soon to die, but He expected also that the Gospel, which He came to bring, would be preached in future ages throughout the world, for He immediately adds: "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also

this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." Did ever any other man provide in the same breath both for his own burial and for universal conquest? But the strange thing is, that what He then looked forward to in distant ages is now being fulfilled before our eyes. The Gospel is being preached "in the whole world," and the fragrance of that one box of ointment has gone to all nations.

Alexander and Cæsar get on well enough with their bloody conquests for a time while they live; but, presently, they die, and their conquests cease. Jesus is crucified and His peaceful victories go on with greater power than ever; ages go by and those conquests are still progressing "in all the world." And all this is just what He said should come to pass. Are such the results of human foresight, or are they the fruits of a divine wisdom and an Almighty power?

Whichever way we look, young people, we shall be more and more impressed that the character of Jesus Christ is not only different from all other characters, but that it is far above the attainment of any merely human genius or goodness.

How came that character into the world? As Joseph Cook has recently pointed out in one of his lectures, before the time of Christ the world had no conception of what a perfect character would be. Many noble men had lived, but none of them had lived above sin and weakness. Poets and philosophers had been thinking and writing for ages; but none of them had ever succeeded in drawing the picture of what a perfect life would be. But when we come to Christ we find One who, from the beginning, is innocent without weakness; who, born into a home of poverty and surrounded by the superstitions of a superstitious age, is himself never superstitious; who, praised by thronging multitudes, is never moved by their flattery to one foolish act; who, cursed by enemies and deserted by friends, never gives way to resentment, never mourns a broken ambition, and is never moved to assert the principle for which He stands with greater vehemence because He is opposed; who speaks for all classes of men without so allying himself to any as to arouse the resentment of others, and who speaks no

word whose beauty perishes as years go by; who, unmoved, beholds the open doors through which He might pass to great worldly honor and riches, and who permits them to close again without so much as a sigh or a look of regret; who never doubts which way is wise, and whose judgment has in no particular been corrected by the scrutiny of eighteen centuries; who calmly plans for the glory of a universal kingdom, even while he is preparing to die in ignominy before that kingdom can boast the possession of a single city, or even of a single roof; and we ask, overwhelmed, as a great infidel once said, "by the majesty of such a character," can such a man be "of the earth earthy?" or is He in very deed "the Lord from heaven."

Again I ask you, young people, How came the thought of such a character to be among men as it is to-day in all the earth? I will not affirm that Jesus Christ lived as the gospels say; I only ask, How came men by the picture of such a life?

You see at once that Christ either lived, and so men simply described what they saw

in Him, or else some one must have invented the fiction which we call "Jesus Christ." But what men were there of that age, who coming after Homer and Hesiod, Plato and Euripides, Virgil and Horace, could give us a fiction which could so far surpass the power of them all?

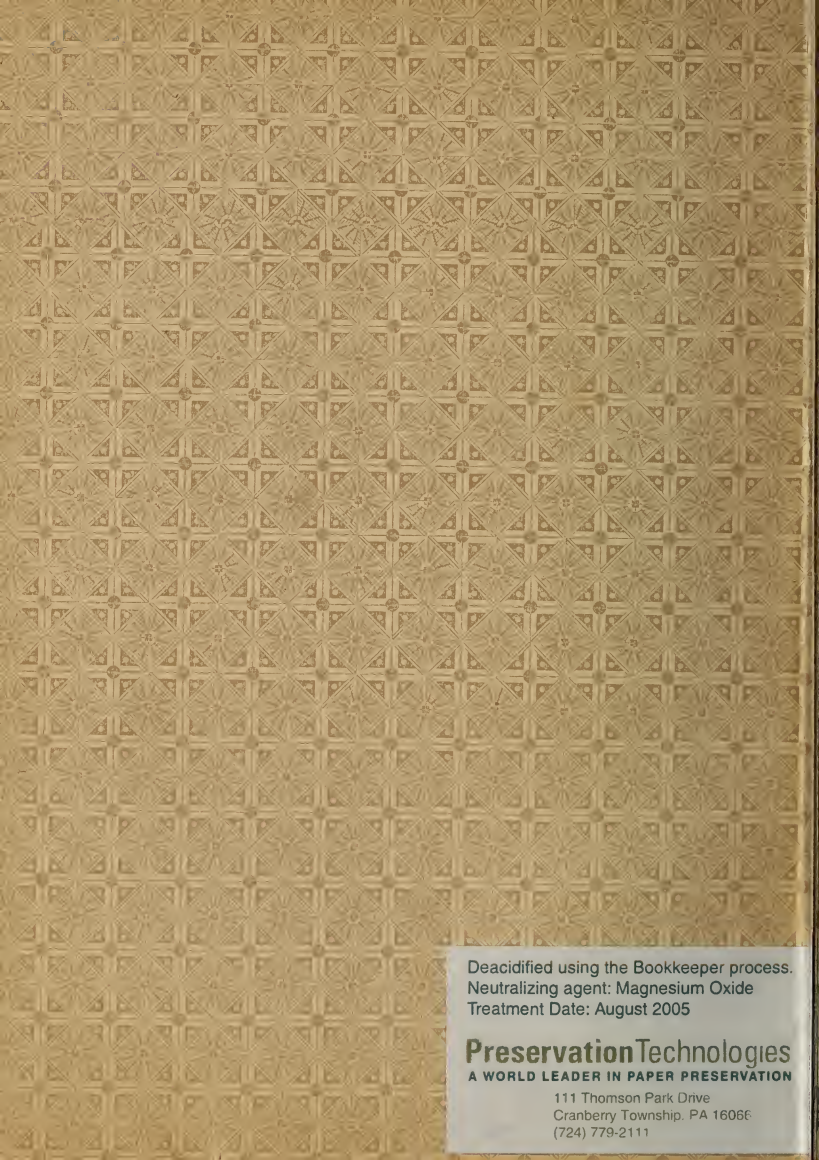
It is one thing for a writer to say, "I will draw for you the outlines of a perfect character," and it is quite another thing for him to do it. When he sets his character to talking and acting, as if among men, he babbles, falters, and is weak like others. The stream which flows from human genius can not rise higher than its source. He whose heart is sullied by sin has lost the power to perceive and tell what a sinless heart would feel and how a sinless man would act.

No, no, young people. The thought is an impossible one. A tax gatherer, a doctor, an apostle's clerk, and a fisherman (none of them literary men) could not have invented a character whose majesty so far surpasses the grandest creations of human genius. They whose hearts had been soiled by sin could not so perfectly have discerned

the impulses of a sinless heart. It was possible for them to put on record the deeds of a sinless and perfect man only because a sinless man had lived on earth. They "were eye-witnesses of His majesty," and they told what they saw; or they learned by intercourse with those who had seen His matchless life.

If any infidel assails your faith, bear these things in mind, and ask him, "How was it possible for Jesus Christ to live as He did?"





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